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INTERNATIONAL REPORT

Education and Training of Muslim Religious Professionals in Europe and North America

International Report

Education and Training of Muslim Religious Professionals in Europe and North America

Dr Niels Valdemar Vinding and Dr Raida Chbib

In memoriam of Prof Dr Ataullah Siddiqui



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Dr Raida Chbib



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1. Preface



Prof. Dr. Bekim Agai
Director of the Academy for Islam
in Research and Society

Training Muslim religious professionals in Europe and North America is at the core of different current debates in the context of Islam in Western societies and has multiple dimensions. It is a field of expectations and projections from different sides in various countries, focussing on certain aspects of a broader field.

With the growing timespan of Muslim presence in the West and the structural integration, Muslims more and more address their specific needs as Muslims in their respective countries vis-à-vis the community and the state they live in. At the same time, these states express their expectations vis-à-vis their Muslim citizens to take more responsibility within society. Muslims ask for qualified imams, preachers and counsellors in their community environment as well as for qualified religious personnel in public institutions like hospitals, the army and prisons. This is a question of demand and equality as Christian counselling has its place in the secular setting that recognises religious needs as part

of fundamental rights.

For integration and security reasons, that is, fear of influence from abroad, the secular nation states have their interest in these questions as well. It is obvious that services have to rely on the Islamic tradition, on the one hand, and have to address the specific situations and standards inside a specific society, on the other, in order to be accepted as Islamic and professionally adequate. 'Importing' religious professionals and emulating models that were developed in other contexts has proven more and more unsatisfying for the different stakeholders from public, religious and civil society institutions. But the secular state cannot offer solutions on its own and the religious communities need expertise from different fields that are not part of a classical religious curriculum and in many cases cooperation with the state is necessary to gain access to fields that are structured by the state or a public beyond the community.

To gather international expertise

and broaden the focus on discussions that mainly take place in the context of different countries, the Academy for Islam in Research and Society (AIWG) has brought together stakeholders from Muslim civil society in different western countries, as well as university scholars and political decision makers in order to get an overview of the current examples of forms of training and the situation of Muslim religious professionals in Europe and North America. The aim is to show commonalities and differences, create awareness of relevant questions, highlight best practice examples and foster a constructive discussion that reaches across national and institutional borders.

In doing so, the Academy for Islam in Research and Society (AIWG) operates within its aim to act as the hub connecting all the relevant institutions that serve the production of a well-founded Islamic knowledge both inside and outside the universities. In other words, our aim is to stimulate sustainable solutions to current

questions connected with Muslim life and religion in Germany and in its neighbour countries.

This publication is a part of the different activities organised and carried out by the International Programme of the AIWG, which brings together academic and fieldwork experts from Europe and North America, establishes relationships to different institutions and experts in different countries and releases reports bringing together practical and scientific perspectives. Two conferences and reports based on it have been supported by the German Foreign Office.

It is mainly based on the contributions of conference participants from their respective countries as well as the thoughts and discussions which took place. The editors and authors, Niels Vinding and Raida Chbib, used this and their own research and expertise to create this volume, which values particular inside observations as well as a broader perspective. This report aims at preparing the ground for a continuous discussion as the training and education of Muslim religious professionals in Europe and North America has a short history and, at

the same time, is very crucial for the future of Muslims and the societies they are part of.

My thanks go not only to the editors but also to all other experts who provided the main body of content for the preparation of this cross-national report. I would also like to thank the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the German Foreign Ministry for financing the implementation of this joint publication.



2. Introduction

The Academy of Islam in Research and Society (Akademie für Islam in Wissenschaft und Gesellschaft, AIWG) at the Goethe University Frankfurt (Germany) has for some time been turning its international research and dissemination focus towards issues concerning religion and social life of Muslims in Europe and North America. At the core of its exchange and dialogue with experts on an international level was the question of the status quo, training and societal responsibility of Muslim professionals, in particular imams and chaplains, in secular societies of Europe and North America.

Not only has there recently been significant public, political and academic interest in Muslim professionals, but such responsible, well-trained and qualified individuals have a growing number of expectations thrust upon them. These expectations not only come from politicians and public authorities, who see Muslim professionals as essential to integration policies and security agendas, but they also come from Muslim communities, who expect their leaders and other trained individuals to perform a host of services and alleviate practical, social, organisational and spiritual grievances.

In 2019, the AIWG pursued this topic as part of its international agenda in two **international conferences**, each with very concrete and clearly defined research questions. The theme of the conference held in Frankfurt in January 2019 was **‘Muslim chaplaincy in Europe and North America’**. The starting point was the fact that the experiences people have with Muslim chaplaincy are currently occurring at the level of civil society, and these are made possible by local initiatives that offer their services to hospitals, universities or prisons in different countries.

The conference sought a wider discussion between relevant actors in different fields (mainly between university scholars, Muslim community actors and state officials) by asking about the content and concepts of chaplaincy within Muslim communities and a debate about the roles that secular universities and Islamic associations can play.

A **second conference** entitled **‘From CopyPaste to Domestic Training? Muslim Religious Leadership**

in Europe and North America’ was organised in Berlin in October 2019. Forty-three experts from state agencies, universities, faith communities and civil society from 14 different countries were given the opportunity to discuss the issue of training imams in European secular societies. While many conceptual issues represented the main focus of the conference in January, here the practical and specific challenges were mainly discussed in the panels, including setting up qualified institutions, the place for women in religious leadership positions, funding to ensure appropriate training courses and positions and salaries for skilled religious personnel.

During the different sessions and panels of these two conferences, the desire to collect and present information, examples and analysis of the development, the status quo and types of imam, chaplaincy and other Muslim professional training in European countries and North America was expressed. Both conferences demonstrated that there were indeed common perspectives and challenges across Europe and North America, but a more systematic overview was found to be missing, as well as a composition of the best practices, main challenges and core recommendations across Europe.

In this **exploratory report** on the **Education and training of Muslim Religious Professionals in Europe and North America** we have sought to collect and present **information** and recommendations from **11 countries** in an illustrative and clear comprehensible form, **bringing together a religious communities-experience with a scholarly perspective**. Thus, we present here a **compact compilation**

and arrangement of inputs from the **short papers submitted by various contributors** from the listed countries in form of a country-comparative overall text. All of the **country correspondents** we consulted offered us, beside information, their best recommendations for what needs to be done. Each **gave their information and recommendations** based on their particular context, but we find that these are generally applicable and may prove useful in a variety of different European contexts.

Methodically speaking, the information, results and recommendations contained in this report are based on **three major steps**:

First, a number of template questions were devised reflecting the main issues from the conferences and structured as represented in the chapters of this exploratory report. These were sent to our European and North American experts, and from that a total of short papers from 11 countries are included here.

Second, the data gathered from the template reports were merged throughout this text, where the information and suggestions are synthesised and systematised along our main key topics by the senior authors.

Third, in presenting the information, the report highlights a comparative approach to the data, material, descriptions, indications and advice from different countries, and it presents them in an illustrative way so as to draw some conclusions and to develop overall recommendations.

THE GUIDING QUESTIONS OF THIS INTERNATIONAL REPORT ROUGHLY REFER

- to the specific constitutional, demographic and political contexts;
- the status quo of education of religious professionals;
- and the situation and work of imams and chaplains in Europe and the USA.

COUNTRIES INCLUDED

The information gathered from the different countries in this report and many recommendations is based mainly on contributions from our experts from the following eleven countries:

Belgium

Jean-François Husson
(Catholic University of Louvain)

Denmark, Norway & Sweden

Naveed Baig
(Ph.d.-student at University of Oslo, and
Chaplain at Rigshospitalet Copenhagen)

France

Mohammed Toualbia
(Grand mosque of Paris & Graduate
School of Social Sciences, EHESS)

Germany

Sukayna El-Zayat
(AIWG, Goethe-University Frankfurt)

Italy

Mohammed Khalid Rhazzali
(University of Padua)
Valentina Schiavinato
(University of Padua)

The Netherlands

Welmoet Boender
(Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

Switzerland

Noemi Trucco
(SZIG, University of Fribourg)

United Kingdom

Ataullah Siddiqui
(Markfield Institute of Higher Education)

USA

Bilal W. Ansari
(Hartford Seminary)
Colleen M. Keyes
(Hartford Seminary)

European Initiative

Michaël Privot

Both senior authors and country correspondents have considered these and more working questions. Each question is the operable guiding question corresponding to a chapter in this report:

- How can the relations between the state and Muslim religious communities be described?
- What is the status of imam education and Islamic chaplaincy training in Europe and North America?
- How and where are imams and Muslim chaplains trained and employed?
- What is the best experience, best practice and good examples from such education and training?
- What are the main challenges to be overcome and the struggles that have been part of the process and progress?
- What would be the main and most important recommendations for future research and practical work in this field?

The **following chapters present** at the beginning

the overall introductory status of institutions and training in the different countries as well as some demographic information. This includes the framework of relations between states and Muslim communities.

The most substantial sections then introduce and briefly discuss the different kinds of Muslim organisations engaged in training of religious professionals, and then compare them to the publicly organised training and education considering newer initiatives that seem to focus more on cooperation, stakeholder engagement and employability.

The following chapters consider imams and other Muslim professionals, such as chaplains, and discuss some of the key structural issues that influence education, employment, payment, accountability etc. After highlighting best-practice approaches and the main challenges, this report concludes with recommendations for a better and more sustainable development of education and training of Muslim professionals in Europe and North America.

KEY TERMS IN THE REPORT

Throughout the report, we use several different terms and choices of words to describe our subject matter. While there is a likely overlap in many contexts, we suggest these to be used as a working distinction.

Muslim Leadership means the position of accountable guiding in mosques, religious organisations or networks, and this includes being an imam, male or female preacher, spokesman, chair as well as member of the board. Different traditions use different words for this; thus, we might include murshidah, hodja, mawlana and so forth.

We find that **Authority** in the context of Muslim communities is of at least two kinds, namely being an authority or being in authority.

The first is a recognition of personal merits, skills, or knowledge, usually associated with one's personal competences, training or education. The second is a recognition of the authority designated to an appointment or position of responsibility, and such authority is embedded in the office or status one holds rather than a personal trait.

We use **Muslim religious professionals** for Muslims employed or doing volunteer work within their professional capacities in a wide range of positions that require or involve (beside other skills) specific training or education in Islamic studies. This may be generic for educators, teachers, healthcare workers or police officers, but it may also be specific for Muslims or other religious professionals, such as Muslim counsellors or chaplains.

Finally, we also use **Muslim personnel** or staff as wider terms for those who are either employed by or formally volunteering within mosques, organisations or institutions and may overlap with the above categories, but may also include many non-religious functions, such as cleaning help, assistants, and so forth.

3. Demographics and national framework



*As of mid-2016, the PEW Research Center estimated that **25.8 million Muslims live in Europe**, defined as the 28 European Union countries, plus Norway and Switzerland. This is **4.9% of the overall population of Europe (520,830,000)**¹. Both the overall number and the national numbers from the PEW come with a long list of caveats, as the research centre itself discuss at great length.*

3.1. On demography of Muslims in Europe

While some countries, like the United Kingdom, include questions on religion in their census, France, for example, has not done so since 1872². To add to the confusion, religious self-identification makes for much lower numbers. According to the PEW, this is an undercount, but it clearly demonstrates the **problem of who is considered Muslim** in this regard. In 2018 the PEW report the **numbers of US Muslims to 3.45 million**, which is approximately **1.1% of the total US population (325,084,756)** (2017)³.

As seen in the table below listing the countries and the different estimates, **the PEW has significantly higher numbers than those provided by the scholars from the Yearbook of Muslims in Europe (YOME) and national offices of statistics**. While some countries demonstrate little discrepancy, more populous countries like France and the United Kingdom, as well as the Netherlands and Denmark, seem to have very exaggerated numbers. Adding to the potential discrepancy, many of the estimates reported in the Yearbook are more recent than those offered by the PEW, e.g., the United Kingdom reported in 2018 and France in 2019.

Muslim Population in 10 European Countries

Countries included in this report	No. of Muslims according to YOME (year)	Percentage	No. of Muslims according to PEW (2017) ⁴	Percentage	Total Population
Belgium	859,223 (2017) ⁵	7.6%	870,000	7.7%	11,322,088 (2017)
Denmark	256,000 (2019) ⁶	4.4%	310,000	5.3%	5,827,463 (2019)
France	4,000,000 (2019) ⁷	6.0%	5,720,000	8.5%	66,992,699 (2019)
Germany	4,700,000 (2016) ⁸	5.7%	4,950,000	6.0%	82,521,700 (2016)
Italy	2,600,000 (2019) ⁹	4.3%	2,870,000	4.7%	60,663,068 (2016)
Netherlands	825,000 (2015) ¹⁰	4.9%	1,210,000	7.1%	16,979,000 (2016)
Norway	270,000 (2019) ¹¹	5.1%	300,000	5.6%	5,328,000 (2019)
Sweden	800,000 (2016) ¹²	7.7%	810,000	7.8%	10,327,000 (2019)
Switzerland	500,000 (2017) ¹³	5.8%	510,000	5.9%	8,603,900 (2019)
United Kingdom	3,372,966 (2018) ¹⁴	5.0%	4,130,000	6.2%	66,797,000 (2019)
Total	18,183,189	5.4%	21.680.000	6.5%	335,361,918

Summing up the additional information provided by the country correspondents many note that Muslims of Turkish and Moroccan **ethnic minorities** are most significant in central European countries. For the United Kingdom and other countries, the South East Asian ethnic background is quite more significant among Muslim communities than others. Muslims who originate from southern European countries, such as Albania or Bosnia-Herzegovina make up large proportions of Muslims in Central-European countries.

As is the case **in most European countries**, the **majority of Muslims are either citizens or have permanent residency**. Many correspondents note that the **Muslim population is relatively young**, mostly with an immigration background. In the United Kingdom, for example, 50% of the Muslim population is under the age of 24¹⁵. In the case of the Netherlands, other correspondents have pointed out that since 2009 the number of second-generation Muslim immigrants has exceeded the number of first generation immigrants.

With regard to the practice of religion or belief, various studies are now available in different countries. An estimate by the French Institute for Demo-

graphic Studies, for example, mentions that there are about 2.1 million observant Muslims in France. In this instance, 'observant' means that they observe Ramadan and go to the mosque regularly based on self-declaration¹⁶.

The 2015-2016 wave of refugees and other migrants have had an influence on the Muslim population in Europe. According to data from the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees of 2016 in Germany for example, the number of Muslims living in Germany increased by around 1.2 million in 2014/2015. As a result, the number of people of the Islamic faith living in Germany rose in a short period from around 3.2 - 3.4 million (BAMF 2011) to a total of around 4.4 - 4.7 million (BAMF 2016). It might be assumed that not only in Germany but also in its neighbour countries, the overall number of the Muslim population has increased during the recent years' immigration due to flight from wars or economic crisis. Thus, there is an ongoing need to address the religious affairs of Muslim minorities and to search for solutions to their social issues in Europe and North America. In light of this, their existing religious communities might be a possible partner for state institutions, because they are often the most important contact point for newly immigrated Muslims and those in social distress.

3.2. Muslim religious communities and the state

The major national structures of relationship between state and church – i.e., religious communities – naturally play a significant part in setting the framework for Islamic institutions. This concerns representation, recognition, funding, support as well as avenues for organising the training and education of Muslim religious personnel inside Europe and the USA. Amongst the countries that have been **instrumental in setting up institutions to represent Muslims**, we count **France, Belgium and the Netherlands**. Each in their way, some sort of intermediary institution has been promoted.

Countries like the **Netherlands, Norway and Germany have left it completely to Muslim organisations to build up representative structures from**

below. This strategy has been moderately successful, and national platforms for dialogue between official authorities and Muslim representatives have been installed, which often include experts and/or actors from relevant religious or social fields.

In countries like **Denmark and Italy**, on the other hand, the **struggle for a higher degree of representivity of Muslim communities and the building of national institutions to organise a formalised dialogue** between state officials and Muslim representatives has been profoundly unsuccessful.

According to their specific constitutional framework, **governments and public authorities in some countries have deliberately set-up structures to accommodate Muslims in the process of institutionalisation**, whereas **other countries have done little or nothing to monitor or to regulate this process.**

Council for Reflection on Islam in France (CORIF)

In 1990, Pierre Joxe, then Minister of the Interior, founded the Council for Reflection on Islam in France (Conseil de Réflexion sur l'Islam en France - CORIF). He asked six Muslim community leaders to propose nine other representatives and they later formed the fifteen-member council. Their task was to prepare joint recommendations to the government on Muslim issues¹⁷. The council members were treated as experts from whom the administration would seek advice on religious questions¹⁸. The CORIF served as a 'surveillance mechanism'¹⁹ for the French government, as visibility of Muslims increased and the government needed to understand the Muslim dynamic beyond the issue of immigration²⁰.

Joxe's successors granted the CORIF varying scopes of action and set different tasks on the council's agenda. CORIF was eventually transformed into the French Council on Muslim Culture (Conseil Français du Culte Musulman - CFCM) by Nicolas Sarkozy in 2003²¹.

While **France** has a **strictly laic civil state that basically does not interfere in religious matters**, it is safe to say that **public attention to Islam and Muslims has been frequent**. For example, in 1990, then Minister of the Interior, Pierre Joxe, founded the CORIF, the Council for Reflection on Islam in France (*Conseil de Réflexion sur l'Islam en France*), which was ill-received by the existing Muslim associations.

Twelve years later, it was reformed into the CFCM, the French Council on Muslim Culture (Conseil Français du Culte Musulman). While the CFCM is supposed to represent all French mosques, it has been criticised as ineffective and is disputed by both Muslim organisations and governmental institutions. The CFCM is not involved in appointments or any of the formal affairs of mosques; instead, it serves in an advisory capacity.

FRENCH COUNCIL ON MUSLIM CULTURE (CFCM)

In 2003, the Council for Reflection on Islam in France (CORIF) was transformed into the French Council on Muslim Culture (Conseil Français du Culte Musulman, CFCM) by the then Interior-Minister, Nicolas Sarkozy. The remodelling was motivated by the 'security question' following 9/11 and was influenced by former Minister of the Interior Jean Pierre Chevènement's consultation with Muslim associations, who brought representatives of the great mosques and Muslim associations together to sign a paper stating the compatibility of Islam with the French Republic²².

The objectives of the CFCM are among others to promote a dialogue between its members in order to develop mutual exchange, to reflect on common issues and to search for shared orientations as well as to ensure the representation of the Muslim faith in public authorities and international institutions²³.

Since its foundation, the CFCM has been criticised by Muslim organisations as well as governmental institutions. Caught up in the rivalries between the allegiances of member-federations to foreign countries, critics claim that the council has never been able to impose itself as a reliable and trustworthy institution to France's Muslims²⁴, often failed to implement its goals and has not been a 'noticeable voice' in the debate on Islam²⁵.

If we compare this to **Belgium**, the **system of relations between churches, state and religion is based on the principle of recognition and public funding of religious denominations** as well as philosophical or life-stance organisations. Derived from a system designed mainly for the Catholic Church under Napoleon, Islam was also included into the recognition procedures in 1974.

The Coordination Council of Islamic Institutions (*Conseil de coordination des institutions islamiques de Belgique, CIB*) was set up in the context of the 2014 formation of the Executive of Muslims in Belgium (EMB), and its main role is to intervene in public debates on behalf of Muslim communities, whereas the EMB's role is principally more limited to shaping relations between state and religious institutions, in particular, Islamic institutions.

The training of imams is directly linked to the different kinds of mosques in Belgium: First, there are mosques that are recognised by regional authorities. Such a recognition process is started by the mosque with the support of the Executive of Muslims in Belgium (EMB) and is then submitted to one of the regional governments. Once recognised, the mosque can be allocated up to three imams, depending on the size of the community. The salary of the imams is then paid by the Federal Ministry of Justice and the respective province. Concerning recruitment and training, the committee of the local mosque assesses the competencies of the candidate imam. His candidacy is then submitted to the Council of Theologians, established in cooperation with the Executive of Muslims in Belgium (EMB). This kind of formal approval of Imams being hired in mosques by an executive committee is unique for Belgium.

COORDINATION COUNCIL OF ISLAMIC INSTITUTIONS IN BELGIUM (CIB)

The Coordination Council of Islamic Institutions in Belgium (*Conseil de Coordination des Institutions Islamiques de Belgique - CIB*) is a citizen's platform made up of institutions, federations and organisations of the Muslim community in Belgium²⁶. It was set up in the context of the modification of the Executive of the Muslims in Belgium (EMB) in 2014. Whereas the EMB is primarily responsible for the relations between the Belgian State and religious institutions, in particular Islamic ones, the CIB's mission is to intervene in public debates on behalf of the Muslim communities and defend their interests.

It can also be consulted by the EMB and the General Assembly of Muslims in Belgium (GA) on questions relating to the societal life of Muslims in Belgium²⁷. The CIB is made up of the following institutions: The Rally of the Muslims in Belgium, The Diyanet of Belgium, The Islamic Federation of Belgium, The Federation of Albanian Mosques of Belgium and The African Islamic Association of Belgium²⁸.

Constitutionally, a similar set of relations between state and religious communities exists in the **Netherlands**. In the **Dutch “pillar system”** (in place between 1900 and 1960) **religion is strongly integrated in the public sphere**. The state historically has supported the academic education of the clergy by funding programmes, both at public and confessional universities and at seminaries of the different religious communities. This support has still to be provided by the government equally to all religious groups, without interfering in those groups’ internal affairs²⁹. Within this framework, Muslim groups have been able to establish religious institutions and to cooperate with the state to resolve some religious issues.

The Contact Organ of Muslims and Government (*Contactorgaan Moslems en Overheid*, CMO) was established as the representative council to organise relations between Muslim communities and the government³⁰. It has eleven Islamic member organisations, the majority of which are made up of Turkish, Moroccan and Pakistani Muslims, not to mention a number of native Dutch converts communities associated³¹.

The relationship between the state and religious communities in **Germany** is characterised **both by elements of separation and of cooperation**. On their own initiative, the four major Islamic organisations joined together in 2007 to form the Coordinating Council of Muslims (*Koordinierungsrat der Muslime in Deutschland*, KRM) at the federal level. This has been an effort to provide a stable partner for the government to negotiate more unified positions on issues related to Muslims in Germany³². Prior to this development, the Deutsche Islam Konferenz (German Islam Conference, DIK) was established in 2006 by the German Minister of Interior as a dialogue platform between German state officials and representatives from



Workshop on Training of Imams, Berlin 2020

Muslim organisations, including other relevant experts. However, specific regulations or forms of cooperation are negotiated at the level of the federal states, who have the effective authority and particularly the legislative competence in the field of religious policy decisions in Germany.

In Switzerland, the **competence to regulate the relationship between the state and religious communities is also decentralised and lies with the 26 cantons**; as a result, **the situation** for Muslim communities and cooperation with state institutions in **every canton is different**. In general, **only religious communities that are recognised under public law** have, for example, **the right to levy taxes**³⁸. In the vast majority of cases, this concerns the two traditional main denominations, the Roman Catholic and the Evangelical Reformed Church, and in some cases certain Jewish communities as well. **Islamic communities are still not officially recognised**, and this means that they, for example, usually finance the employment of an imam and their property solely through membership fees and donations – substantial foreign contributions representing the one excep-

tion³⁹. However, in order to represent the Muslim associations also on a nationwide level, an umbrella organisation of all umbrella organisations was founded in 1978. The Coordination of Islamic Organizations Switzerland (KIOS) is the first Islamic National Association of Muslims in Switzerland. This national association is a coordination network between the cantonal associations and individual associations. Although the KIOS had already existed for some years now, it represents only a handful of umbrella organisations. Another association, the Federation of Islamic Umbrella Organizations Switzerland (FIDS), was founded in 2006. The FIDS consists of 12 umbrella organisations and currently represents 170 Islamic centres in Switzerland, making it the largest Islamic organisation in the country⁴⁰.

GERMAN ISLAM CONFERENCE (DEUTSCHE ISLAM KONFERENZ, DIK)

The German Islam Conference (Deutsche Islam Konferenz – DIK) is a permanently institutionalised forum for dialogue between different administrative levels of the German state and Muslims in Germany. In 2006, the DIK was founded by the German Federal Ministry of the Interior³³. Its main political goal is to promote ‘an Islam within, from and for Germany’³⁴.

Therefore, the DIK aims among other things to improve the religious and societal participation of the Muslim population, to enable exchange and cooperation between the federal state and Muslim communities as well as to expand knowledge about and improve data availability on Muslim life in Germany³⁵. The German Islam Conference is organised according to the legislative periods of the German federal parliament. In former periods, the DIK was shaped by specific formats and panels attended by representatives of various administrative levels of the German state as well as selected experts and repre-

sentatives of umbrella organisations and other associations of Muslim society that discussed assigned topics. However, due to the founding of numerous new Muslim initiatives and organisations, especially by the younger generation, and to better capture the plurality of opinion within the Muslim society, the current DIK was designed with flexible and variable formats on relevant and event-related topics³⁶.

In addition to conferences, panel discussions and other events that enable dialogue, the German Islam Conference also offers financial support programmes, like the ‘Mosques for Integration’ programme, which aim to support, professionalise and help Muslim communities to cooperate with the municipal administration³⁷.

Norway, Sweden and Denmark have many similarities in the measures taken to provide chaplaincy services for Muslims and in the religious constitution. Basically, all three countries have a **strong affiliation to the Evangelical Lutheran Church**, as it is the majority denomination. In Denmark, the Lutheran clergy is – apart from a couple of exceptions noted as best practice – the only religious representative formally employed across societal sectors. In **Norway**, there has been a **formal separation between church and state**, but due to the history of pastoral services at hospitals, the church still has a significant presence and structure there. While there is an official separation of church and state in Sweden, they still work closely together at the institutional level.

The overall church-state relationship, specifically its impact on chaplaincy in public institutions, cannot be underestimated. Questions concerning Churches' role and position as the main religious institution in state, in light of the more recently evolved smaller denominations and their eagerness to be part of public

MUSLIM COUNCIL OF SWEDEN (SMR)

The Swedish Muslim Council (Sveriges Muslimska Råd - SMR) is a democratic non-profit umbrella organisation that brings together nationwide Muslim organisations in Sweden⁴². The council was founded in 1990 with the aim to promote cooperation and dialogue among its member organisations, and it aspires to unite the Swedish Muslims around their common challenges, goals and interests.

Furthermore, it wants to strengthen the Muslim civil society as well as the Swedish Muslim identity⁴³. For example, the SMR played a part in the Swedish government's dialogue on societal values⁴⁴. Among its members are the Bosnian Islam Community (BIS), the United Islamic Associations in Sweden (FIFS), the Islamic Relief in Sweden and Sweden's Young Muslims (SUM)⁴⁵.

chaplaincy work as well as issues related to the securing of funds for various chaplaincy positions are all relevant and urgent questions.

ISLAMIC COUNCIL OF NORWAY (IRN)

The Islamic Council of Norway (Islamsk Råd Norge - IRN) is an umbrella organisation for Islamic denominations and organisations in Norway⁴⁶. The IRN was founded in 1993, and starting in 2006 received about 1.3 Mio NOK in state funding per year by the Norwegian Ministry of Culture⁴⁷. The council aims to promote unity among Muslims in Norway, to safeguard the rights and interests of its member organisations and to contribute to building a Norwegian-Muslim identity. Additionally, it seeks to be a bridge builder and dialogue partner that creates mutual understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims in Norway⁴⁸. The council currently represents 33 member organisations spread across the country, and these in turn have close to 65,000 Muslims as members⁴⁹. Following several controversies around the IRN, some major mosques and organisations resigned from the council⁵⁰, and the Norwegian Ministry of Culture stopped its funding of the umbrella organisation in 2017⁵¹.

In **Denmark**, there are a **few Muslim umbrella organisations that from time to time seek to represent segments of the Muslim population at the state and municipality level**, such as the Joint Council of Muslims or the Danish Muslim Union. Overall, however, these have been quite unsuccessful in establishing representation or relations to the government. In **Sweden**, the Muslim Council of Sweden is an umbrella organisation of Islamic organisations with close ties to the Social Democratic Party and have been able to actively influence Swedish politics. In **Norway**, the Islamic Council of Norway is perhaps the most successful organisation in Scandinavia, yet it is not without problems of representation and legitimacy⁴¹.

In **Italy**, the **constitution recognises officially the Catholic Church** but also **enshrines the principle of separation between State and Church**. Based on the freedom of religion it also gives other smaller religious groups the possibility for self-organisation. Muslims have among others made use of it in the last decades.

In 1990, first, the Union of Italian Islamic Communities – (Unione delle Comunità Islamiche d'Italia, UCOII) was founded in Ancona. It was initially established by former Syrian, Palestinian and Jordanian students and inherited the leadership of the old USMI (the Union of Muslim Students of Italy). This Union of Muslim Students in Italy was founded in the 1970s, and it was the result of various attempts to create national networks aimed at coordinating organisational activities and synthesising the content when it came to the negotiations between Muslims and the Italian state.

The first leaders of the UCOII were neo-traditionalists and true 'entrepreneurs of religious visibility', a good part of whom was linked to or close to the 'Muslim Brotherhood'. The current leadership, in contrast, is less interested in international political issues, instead concentrating on issues of national importance for Muslims. In 2013, roughly 205 mosques and places of prayer were affiliated to it⁵². Second, The Islamic Cultural Center of Italy (Centro Islamico Culturale d'Italia - CICI), was established in 1995 and is current-

ly the only Islamic body with recognised legal status. This association manages the Great Mosque of Rome, the first major place of worship in the form of a grand mosque to arise in Italy. In the past, the CICI was under the control of the ambassadors of some Islamic countries. In 2017, the CCII amended the statute by ending the hegemony of the ambassadors, even if it continues to be under the protection of the Kingdom of Morocco, especially for the financing of the greater part of the management costs.

Overall, in all European countries, within the framework of the two largest Islamic denominations of Sunni and Shiite Islam, a number of local Muslim communities affiliated to large religious umbrella organisations as well as – smaller and larger – single local mosque communities have evolved that are not affiliated to a larger organisation.

One such example of a **larger organisational structures of Muslim religious affairs**, which can be observed in every European country, are the **Turkish-Islamic organisations with affiliations to the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs** (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*, or just '*Diyanet*'), which coordinates all mosques and imams linked to the Directorate.

TURKISH DIRECTORATE OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS (DIYANET) IN EUROPE

The Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) is a Turkish State-run department responsible for the regulation of the Islamic religion and its practical implementation⁵³. While its main purpose has historically been the organisation of religious services as part of public national service within Turkey as a secular State, this has changed somewhat in the last ten years towards a more extensive understanding of religious practices. Diyanet currently provides charitable, cultural and educational offers in 145 countries⁵⁴ and predominantly support Turkish mosque communities

in Europe, to which it has been sending Turkish imams abroad since the 1970s⁵⁵. Several national umbrella organisations linked to the Diyanet were founded in Europe, such as DITIB in Germany⁵⁶. In most other countries, such as the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria and Sweden as well as the United Kingdom, the Diyanet does not offer training in the specific country. Instead, it educates imams and female preachers in Turkey in order to dispatch them for a limited time period⁵⁷.

It makes up a more or less substantial share of the organisational field. In many countries, such as Germany, the Turkish-Islamic Union of the Institute for Religion (*Türkisch-Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion DITIB*) or Denmark, Danish-Turkish Islamic Foundation (*Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse, DTIS*), it is even the largest organisation representing mosque communities. **Most Turkish imams sent by the Diyanet are educated at Turkish State universities and trained there according to its curriculum and standards.**

Besides, there are a **number of smaller organisations of different Muslim ethnic minorities in European countries:**

- whose religious leaders are either also dispatched from a Muslim majority country and trained there,
- or they are not trained according to a specific programme in a respective institution for Islamic studies (eg autodidactic imams)
- or are trained according to their programmes of their own umbrella organisation inside Europe.

One **such example for a medium-sized organisation in France** is the network of the **Grand Mosque**

of Paris, which was established by the French state in 1926 and was initially funded by the French government and later by the Algerian government⁵⁸. The Grand Mosque of Paris (Grande mosquée de Paris, GMP) has long been the main point of contact in all questions related to Muslims and Islam for the French state and is linked to approximately 150 to 200 mosques throughout France.

Thus, what all European countries have in common is that there is no uniform Muslim religious organisation, for example, of Sunni Muslims, which encompasses all Sunni communities in the country and is able to represent them. Accordingly, there is no single institutionalised religious community or representation for the entire Islamic religion. Instead, there are larger and smaller organisations that are structured nationwide, so-called umbrella organisations, which hold together the large number of local communities. In many countries dialogue or cooperation bodies are created to bring together representatives from Muslim organisations on one side with state officials on the other for discussing Muslim religious and other affairs.

THE NETWORK OF THE GRAND MOSQUE OF PARIS

Many smaller organisations of Muslim ethnic minorities in different countries are also established and seek to build training. One such example is the network of the Grand Mosque of Paris, which has been formed by the French State in 1926 and has been funded in its early years by the French and later by the Algerian government⁵⁹. Besides offering religious services and a Halal certification service, the institution also engages in several cultural and scientific activities⁶⁰. Therefore, the Grand Mosque of Paris has long been the main reference partner in all questions on Muslims and Islam for the French State and cultivates a huge network being linked to approximately 150 to 200 mosques throughout France.

Due to the communities' need for educated religious leaders in France the Institute Al Ghazali was established in 1993. It is hosted by the Grand Mosque of Paris and mainly funded by the Algerian government. The Institute offers classical programs in training imams as well as chaplains and more than 1000 religious leaders have already graduated. The courses are taught by teaching teams, mainly made up of imams with higher education degrees from Algerian Universities and some with additional degrees from French Universities to train the students for imamate and chaplaincy⁶¹. Its vision is to 'train men and women who will fulfil the religious needs of the Muslim community and deliver the great message of Islam in France spreading wisdom and respect'⁶². Owing to high request the Institute was able to open a branch in Les Mureaux (in Yvelines) in February 2020 and plans to establish further schools in Lille, Lyon and Marseille⁶³.



Grand Mosque of Paris, France



4. Educational Institutions

Despite constitutional differences in framing structures of religious communities, in most countries there are larger Muslim organisations as well as attempts to build up training possibilities of imams and religious professionals inside their countries. Several countries have Muslim organisations working on initiatives ranging from less organised and ad hoc to more ambitious and well-funded programmes.

Training institutions of Muslim religious staff in Europe and North America can roughly be divided in **two categories**:

the **private, community-based initiatives**, and the **publically governed education programmes** associated with leading universities or other academic institutions.

In some countries, there are efforts to build a connection between these two forms. The reasons for a solid training and education of religious personnel are many, but producing accountable professionals addressing the specific religious and other needs of the European and American Muslim minorities for the coming generations is essential. Thus, greater

attention and attempts to build up domestic training programmes or to extend existing initiatives can be observed in a number of European and North American countries in the past few years. As a result – which reflects that the **issue of extending domestic programmes for training of religious personnel is a rather young, developing and experimental field that has developed significantly in the last decade – new initiatives** can be observed in different countries which are either primarily developed out of the Muslim community or which develop through initiatives by university scholars, cooperation councils or state institutions.

4.1. Community-based institutionalisation of imam training

In the different countries, various forms of community-based training institutions or programmes can be found that reflect the history and background of Muslims living there and their institutional framework.

In the **United Kingdom**, the **field of imam training is strongly marked by the so-called 'dar al-'ulums, Muslim religious seminaries**. These were set up mainly by British Muslims of South East Asian background to produce graduates well versed in certain traditional Islamic jurisprudential knowledge largely relating to the Hanafi school of thought in the Sunni tradition. The first such seminary was established in 1973 in Bury, England. Today, there are probably between 30 and 35 such institutions in the country.

While religious instruction remains the focus of their activities, many have made room for English and math classes, and somewhat later, GCSE- and A-Level courses were also introduced. **In the UK, imams are paid and supported by the Muslim community**. While each mosque is independent, denominational associations do exist and constitute an informal connection.

In the **Netherlands**, **training of religious personnel may be financed by the government**. The first way to ensure the funding is to join pre-existing institutions. The second is to have the general education of professional clergy provided by a public faculty of religion, whereas clergy-specific education is provid-

ed by the religious organization itself. The third way, which is the path chosen by the **Islamic University for Applied Sciences Rotterdam, (IUR)**, is that of building up their own institution. At present the IUR offers higher education that **is not financed by the state**, and it is unable to offer either recognized University titles for graduates or scholarships for students⁶⁴. However, it is a **higher vocational professional training institute** started in 1999, which offers degrees in Islamic Theology and in Islamic Spiritual Care, both accredited by the Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Organization (NVAO). The Bachelor of Islamic Theology prepares students for the professional world of working in the mosque, where men may work as imams or theologians and women as

religious teachers or theologians.

The establishment of this university is directly linked to an initiative by a group of Sunni Muslims from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Such a religious academic institution of higher education of faith-based Islamic studies, which is not affiliated to any specific Islamic organisation and with a domestic programme for the training of Muslim religious leaders, is a quite rare phenomenon in European countries and is possible within the constitutional framework of the Netherlands.



Fast facts

- Established in 1997
- 300 students
- 16 different ethnic backgrounds
- BA Islamic Theology
- MA Islamic Chaplaincy
- Quran Institute
- Arabic language teaching centre

Cooperations

- Accredited by Erasmus + Charter
- 60 students abroad in 3 years
- 10 destinations in 8 countries
- Christian University Ede

Structure

- Board of Governors
- Executive Board
- BaMa Training Director
- BaMa Training Committee
- Examination Board
- Student adviser and student counsellor
- Student Administration
- Supervisory Board

Finances

- 2100€ Tuition a year
- Study funding available since 2013 from the state
- Donations



Poster Islamic University Rotterdam, Netherlands



Students of Al Ghazali Institute Paris with Rector and General Director

In **France**, there are **some institutions meant to train and educate imams inside the country**. The oldest is a private community-based institution, the **European Institute for Humanities (Institut Européen des Sciences Humaines, IESH)**, which was founded in Chateau-Chinon by the Union of Islamic Organisations of France (*Union des organisations islamiques de France, UOIF*) in 1990 with the explicit aim of training French imams. It offers different programmes at the bachelor level; a two-year course in Arabic languages, literature and civilisations; a two-year course educating imams and teachers, as well as treating Quranic studies; and a three-year course in Islamic theology.

The institute is not accredited, which means that students do not have to fulfil the same requirements as those needed to study in a public university to be accepted; moreover, the awarded degrees are not equivalent to those gained at a public French university. The educational material and content is determined by an academic board and takes its point of orientation from the European Council of Fatwa and Research, whose president is Yusuf Qaradawi⁶⁵.

Another of the main institutions emerged in 1993, when the Grand Mosque of Paris established **the Institute Al-Ghazali**, which offers **degrees in Islamic**

Sciences and Islamic Chaplaincy⁶⁶. The Institute Al Ghazali was founded based on a community need for educated religious leaders in mosques and is part of the Grand Mosque of Paris.

Much like in France, the training and recruitment of religious personnel of all denominations in **Italy** is not regulated directly by the state, but rather an area of autonomous management by religious institutions. **The training of imams and chaplains has been left to individual Muslim communities and has been mainly realised at universities or private bodies in the countries of origin of Muslims**. In most cases, the main Islamic organisations in Italy, or the individual mosques, organise **short training courses** – usually just a few hours – designed as refresher courses or seminar activities. To illustrate this point, the CII (Italian Islamic Confederation) invited the European Council of Moroccan Ulemas to train Italian imams, in particular, on how to conduct a *khutba*, which could be consistent with the life of the believers in the European context.

In **Germany**, **most full-time imams/hodjas of mosques are being trained according to the specific training programme of the respective umbrella organisation**. This training is offered within institutions of the specific religious community.

While this **often takes place outside of Germany at academic institutions in the country of origin** of a specific religious group, there are **some domestic training programmes**.

Imams employed by **the Turkish-Islamic Union of the Institute for Religion (DITIB)** e.g. have predominantly completed a four-year study programme in Islamic theology (about 70%), or have accomplished secondary training in the form of a two-year further education programme (about 30%) in Turkey, before being sent to work at mosques in Germany⁶⁷. Students who study in Turkey have then the possibility to take part in an Islamic theology programme for international purposes (UIP – International Theology), in an effort to prepare graduates for religious work outside of Turkey⁶⁸.

Already in the 1980s, another Turkish-Islamic Sunni organisation, the **Union of Islamic Cultural Centres (Verband der Islamischen Kulturzentren, VIKZ)**, started its **own programme to train imams in the form of extra courses on the weekend or during holidays inside Germany** according to their specific religious doctrine. The programme eventually developed into a private three-year training programme, includ-

ing final examinations and a subsequent one-year internship within a mosque community. Held in Turkish and Arabic, the lessons cover Quranic Studies, Arabic Studies and theological units, with about 35 participants every year⁶⁹. During the internship, the graduates are trained by an experienced imam to prepare them to lead a mosque community and to take care of the religious, social and cultural interests and needs of Muslims there. Another Islamic umbrella organisation, the Islamic Community of the Milli Görüş (IGMG) provides similar training programmes in Germany for its own religious leaders. Similar to DITIB, imams of the **Islamic Community of Bosniaks in Germany (Islamische Gemeinschaft der Bosniaken in Deutschland, IGBD)** are usually graduates of a study programme in Sarajevo and therefore educated in Bosnia. However, as of now, there is no specific additional concept to prepare these imams for their work in Germany. Not all mosque communities belong to one of these larger umbrella organisations, and they sometimes employ imams who have no explicit religious training or background. It is clear that in Germany there is no one way of becoming an imam, and the duties and work of imams are to a great extent dependent on the specific mosque community.

4.2. Publicly organised training and education

Across many European countries, the responsibility for training and education in the field of theology is not necessarily linked to the Muslim organisations alone; universities are active in the organisation process as well. In Germany and the Netherlands, for example, this is primarily done in cooperation with Christian churches or with Muslim stakeholder organisations, in the case of Islam.

Training of religious personnel in Germany is, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, **quite diverse and differs in length, the type of educating institution and their curriculum according to the specific Islamic umbrella organisation**.

For a **general university education in the field of faith-based Islamic theology**, the German state has established Islamic theological studies at **public universities** throughout the country based on a

recommendation of the National Academic Council in 2010⁷⁰. Since then, the government has funded chairs in Islamic theology at seven universities with about 44 million Euro. This allowed up to 2500 students (until 2019) to receive a university degree in Islamic theology⁷¹. However, **imam training as such is not part of the education at universities**. Currently, discussions are being held on how graduates of German university Islamic theological studies can be prepared for assuming religious leadership functions in mosque communities through appropriate programmes and additional training supported by Islamic communities (see Chapter 5.4).

In the **Netherlands**, since 2005, **Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU)** has offered a **scientific study programme in Islamic Theology at the BA and MA levels**, followed by the possibility of a one-year

official study programme in imam training. The Centre for Islamic Theology was established for this purpose. The VU Amsterdam offers several relevant MA programs, including a one-year Master in Islamic Spiritual Care and the two-year (educational) Master in Education in the humanities and social sciences, specialising in religion or world views. It is also possible to take the two-year Research Master specialising in Islam Studies, followed by the possibility of a pursuing a PhD. The VU is the only public university in the Netherlands that offers a scientific education in Islamic Theology and Islamic Spiritual Care.

France is a special case in this context, as there are **no state universities teaching Islamic theology as a subject**. However, the **French government has established study programmes in 'Politics, Religion and Laicity' at 18 universities since 2008**⁷². Imams who take part in the programmes usually are awarded with an accredited university degree after completion of the courses, which cover topics such as French citizenship, political structures, democracy and judicial issues. They do not explicitly cover any theological or religious matters, but intend to integrate foreign imams more closely into the French context, as there are treaties obligating imams from Algeria, Turkey and Morocco to complete such a course⁷³.

There is at present no state funded 'imam education' in **Denmark, Sweden or Norway**, although there are theological and religious studies covering Islam at universities, along with private Islamic institutions that offer 'imam education' through training in traditional Islamic sciences in local languages⁷⁴. There is no Muslim chaplaincy training at the moment – governmental or private – in the Nordic countries, albeit an emerging interest in the area of chaplaincy at public institutions does exist. Nevertheless, **Norway established a religious leaders training programme** ('Becoming a Religious Leader in Norwegian Society') in **2007 at the University of Oslo that brings together religious leaders of different religions for education and training, comprising three modules**⁷⁵. It is based on a parliamentary decision to offer a more thorough 'knowledge of society' to reli-

gious leaders who have immigrated to Norway. With reference to the Faculty of Theology's competence in the field of interreligious studies, the faculty was given the task (by the Ministry of Labor and Inclusion) to implement the project. The **University of Oslo** has also different programmes that focus on Islamic topics, which resulted then in hiring of two experts in Islamic disciplines, namely Islamic philosophy and Quranic studies. Just recently, the same Faculty **has started a new academic programme in chaplaincy focusing on Christian, Humanistic, Buddhist and Islamic chaplaincy**, all of them with the employment of placement at an institution⁷⁶. Various imams and Muslim leaders have taken the Islamic chaplaincy module, which has been offered two times since its inception.

In **Switzerland**, a decades-long political and public dialogue process gave rise to the **Swiss Center of Islam and Society (Schweizerisches Zentrum für Islam und Gesellschaft / Centre Suisse Islam et Société, SZIG/CSIS) at the University of Fribourg**, which opened in 2015⁷⁷. The **SZIG/CSIS builds up competencies for Islamic theology in Switzerland through a doctoral programme. Since 2017, it has also been running a Master's programme called 'Islam and Society'**, which is characterised by a combination of social science and (Islamic) theological approaches. However, it also conducts various continuing education courses and workshops for Muslim actors in cooperation with Muslim organisations. These take place within the framework of the project 'Muslim Organisations as Social Actors' (*Muslimische Organisationen als soziale Akteure*, MOGA). Among them are **specific workshops for imams and Muslim chaplains**. From 2017 to 2019, the SZIG/CSIS furthermore offered on two occasions a continuing education course for Muslim chaplains in the canton of Zurich on behalf of the Quality Assurance of Muslim Chaplaincy in Public Institutions (*Qualitätssicherung der muslimischen Seelsorge in öffentlichen Institutionen, QuaMS*)⁷⁸. In addition, it will offer a Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) 'Muslim Chaplaincy in Public Institutions' in 2020 (SZIG/CSIS 2020).

4.3. New innovative initiatives for training at institutions of higher education

Most interestingly in the field of domestic training programmes for Muslim religious personnel is the **advent of recent and new programmes and initiatives for training Muslim religious professionals across a surprising number of European countries**. Many of these programmes and initiatives draw on years of political negotiations, scholarly capacity building and developing practical experience. Some are presented here, and more are discussed in the next chapter.

Belonging to the more innovative approaches is the **professionalisation programme for mosque-based imams in the Netherlands** (*Professionaliseringsprogramma Imams in Nederland*, **PIN**). In 2018-19, VU Amsterdam, in close cooperation with the Representative Council of Muslims in the Netherlands (CMO) and the Council of Moroccan Mosques in the Nether-

lands (RMMN), started to offer an intensive, interactive practice-based training programme that aims to serve the needs of the Dutch Muslim community and their religious personnel. The VU Amsterdam traditionally houses academic and post-academic training programmes of a large number of religious communities (various Protestant denominations, Orthodox Christianity, Buddhism, migrant churches and Islam).

PIN aims to increase the professional working repertoire of imams who are already hired in mosques in the Netherlands. Through the participation of delegated imams and/or mosque administrators from virtually all movements within the Muslim community in the Netherlands in the VU programme, it seeks to reach as many movements within Islam as possible.

THE PROFESSIONALISATION OF IMAMS IN THE NETHERLANDS (PIN) TRAINING PROGRAM

As an example of a project intending to improve and adjust competencies of imams the 'Professionalisation of Imams in the Netherlands (PIN)' training programme is worth highlighting. In 2018-19, the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU), in close cooperation with the Representative Council of Muslims in the Netherlands (CMO) and the Council of Moroccan Mosques in the Netherlands (RMMN), offered an intensive, interactive, practice-based training programme that aims to serve the needs of the Dutch Muslim community and their religious personnel.

The project was financed by the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and the VU Amsterdam. The classes were designed to train competencies in leadership, communication, cooperation, and professionalism, as well as societal knowledge and Dutch language proficiency. To this end, two-day master classes introduced the participants to the 'Western society and religion' and 'Modernity and Islamic theology'. Furthermore, those participating had the chance to attend five specialisation modules, including 20-day seminars on '(Muslim) youth, social identification and religion', 'Explaining Qur'an in the Dutch context' and 'History, culture and governance of the Netherlands'. Mosque board members could visit an additional module on good governance. Complementing the classes, site visits were offered, for example, to the Parliament, a Jewish museum and a high school.

In total, 75 participants (64 men and 11 women) attended the PIN training programme. The participants were sent by 15 umbrella organisations and originated from different countries, including Morocco, Turkey and Suriname, which meant that the programme was able to reach and impact a diverse group of people.

Seventy-five imams and other religious functionaries, among them women, participated, all having advanced theological knowledge. The course focuses on professionalisation skills to adequately function in pluriform Dutch society. The programme consisted of different modules and covers 22 days in total. The training is to a high degree practice-based, problem-oriented and focused on practical improvement in providing religious based social services. It aims at exposing imams to central issues and challenges in Dutch society and to equip them to be (self) reflective practitioners who acquire the skills to provide their service to clients with diverse social and individual backgrounds. Part of this is to give imams greater insight into different aspects of complex societal problems within an academic context to develop skills to discuss, as well as to preach on central social issues with their specific target groups and in professional contexts, for instance, with other colleagues.

In **Belgium**, there is a new training scheme set up by the Academy for Training and Research in Islamic Studies, **AFOR (Académie de formation et de recherche en études islamiques)** established by Muslim personalities from larger representative Muslim organisations in Belgium. It appears to be the most viable option when moving forward in this issue in Belgium. With the support of the Federal Minister of Justice, it has developed a 4- to 5-year training in cooperation with one Dutch-speaking and one French-speaking university, respectively KU Leuven and UC Louvain. The planned **programme with the UC Louvain (Université catholique de Louvain)** organises the civil or lay component through two certificates, not restricted to imams and chaplains. The theological component is entirely provided by AFOR, as related to the Executive of Muslims in Belgium and the main Muslim representative organisations.

MARKFIELD INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION (MIHE)

The Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE) is an educational institute focusing on different topics of Islamic studies⁷⁹. It was established by the Islamic Foundation in 2000, and it is located in Markfield near Leicester, UK⁸⁰. Its mission is to educate scholars who possess a broader, deeper and critical understanding of Islam in the contemporary context and therefore are 'better equipped to act as a bridge in developing understanding between Muslim communities and the Western society they live in'⁸¹. In 2003, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) praised the MIHE's work by stating that it 'provides students with high standards of Islamic and Western scholarship, in an environment in keeping with Islamic values and traditions. A unique feature of the MIHE.'⁸²

The MIHE currently offers BA degrees in 'Islamic Studies', 'Islamic Studies and Arabic', and 'Islamic Finance and Accounting' and MA degrees in, among others 'Islamic Studies', 'Islam, Pastoral Care and Counselling' and 'Islam and Sustainable Development'. The institute also offers doctorate level programmes on topics related to 'Islamic Studies', 'Islamic Education', and 'Islamic Banking', 'Finance and Management'⁸³. Since 2003, it provides a course with a Certificate in Muslim Chaplaincy. Students completing this course can find jobs as chaplains in hospitals, prisons, universities, and the Army⁸⁴. Over the years, more than 750 students have graduated from the Institute.

As one of the few domestic education or training offers for Muslim religious leaders in **Switzerland** aimed exclusively at imams or Muslim chaplains, the continuing education course '**Muslim Chaplaincy and Counselling in an Interreligious Context**' at the **Swiss Center for Islam and Society (SZIG/CSIS)** is currently another example of an innovative approach. The Union of Islamic Organisations in Zurich (VIOZ) and the canton of Zurich founded the Quality Assurance of Muslim Chaplaincy in Public Institutions (QuaMS) for the purpose of centralisation and quality assurance of Muslim chaplaincy in the canton of Zurich. It was therefore necessary to offer such a continuing education course. The **SZIG/CSIS** was commissioned to run the course, while the project as a whole was accompanied by the Catholic and Protestant churches. The continuing education course was aimed at residents of the canton of Zurich who are willing to participate in Muslim chaplaincy in public institutions in their canton. Requirements for admission is basic theological knowledge as well as a matriculation exam or a degree in a relevant field, for example, in health care. Admitted candidates were additionally screened for suitability by the canton. The immediate aim of the course was the creation of a pool of Muslim chaplains with basic training. The continuing education course was followed by a 60-hour internship in a public institution, where the trainee was accompanied by a Protestant or Catholic chaplain as a mentor.

In terms of content, the course focused on providing basic skills for chaplaincy and counselling in an interreligious and inter-professional field of work. This includes topics such as communication techniques, support during grief and loss, confidentiality and data protection, the legal and social framework of chaplaincy, the basics of mental illness, chaplaincy in hospitals and in emergency assistance, and units on Islamic theological foundations.

In the **United Kingdom**, imams who had completed their *dars-i Nizami* – the study curriculum at the *dar al-'ulum* – found themselves academically 'stranded', with very limited prospects for progression. In 2012, the **Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE)** created the opportunity, with the full cooperation of its validating university, for such graduates to be exempted from the first year of a BA (Hons) programme in Islamic Studies. The MIHE course covers most of the studies of the first year of a BA during stu-

dents' *dar al-'ulum* time, and a substantial number of students are now following this route. They are also finding opportunities – both academic and non-academic – outside the mosques. Also, the **certificate course in Muslim Chaplaincy offered by MIHE is the first of its kind**. This short course began in 2003 and runs for eight months each year. Students are expected to spend a substantial amount of time during the course on placement, either in a hospital, within the prison service or in the further/higher education sector.

To sum up, there is a curious and need-driven development of training initiatives underway across most European countries surveyed here. Most involve cooperation across Muslim organisations and public education institutions, as they seek to prepare graduates for the small but developing job market for Muslim professionals. There is a tremendous degree of experimentation and adaptation going on to meet the spiritual and religious needs of European Muslims, and, as will be seen in the next chapters, they face many of the same challenges.

4.4. The tripartite model of American education of Muslim religious leaders

When it comes to educational institutions, the experience and the input from the United States remains a highly interesting and contrastive case for comparison and discussion of different European initiatives for the training of Muslim religious leaders. Overall, there are three types of education offers of higher education with accredited degrees in America:

The first type of educational offering enables students to receive a degree from an accredited higher education institution. Colleges, universities, and seminaries or theological education institutions, which are regionally accredited as higher learning institutions and are recognised by the United States Department of Education, offer undergraduate de-

grees (bachelor's), and/or postgraduate degrees, and certificates (master's, Master of Divinity, PhD, and D. Min). In addition to being regionally accredited, some of these graduate institutions are accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS).

A noteworthy example is Zaytuna, a liberal arts college, which offers a degree in Islamic Law and Theology that provides the education necessary for a would-be imam. Zaytuna's degree programmes do not have specific courses in chaplaincy and do not profess to train either imams or chaplains. A Zaytuna BA or MA graduate, however, with graduate chaplaincy education and supervised internship/externship/apprenticeship such as Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) from a board-certified CPE supervisor would

have the requisite educational background for either a chaplaincy or imam position.

Other examples include, the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) at Berkeley, California, which offers a Graduate Certificate in Interreligious Chaplaincy, a Master of Arts in Islamic Studies and Doctorate of Ministry (D.Min) at the Pacific School of Religion within GTU.

Hartford Seminary in Hartford, Connecticut, offers a Master of Arts in Religious Studies (MARS), a Graduate Certificate in Islamic Chaplaincy (GCIC), a Master of Divinity equivalent by combining MARS with GCIC, a Doctor of Ministry as well as a Graduate Certificate in Imam and Community Leadership. Also, the Bayan-Claremont-Chicago Theological Seminary offers a Master of Divinity in Islamic Chaplaincy, a Master of Arts in Islamic Studies and Leadership, and a Certificate in Islamic Chaplaincy.

The second type of educational offering are degree programmes in **unaccredited higher education institutions**. These post-secondary institutions offering bachelor and master's, doctor of ministry and PhD degrees in Islamic Studies or branches thereof, which might potentially produce persons



Fast Facts

Founded in 1834

Located in Hartford, CT, in between Boston and New York City

150 students

Student Body:

- 45% Christian; 34% Muslim;
- 21% Jewish or other

25% of classes offered online

Core faculty: 8; Faculty Associates, 11; Staff members, 21



Structure

Hartford Seminary is a free-standing, non-denominational institution. It is governed by a Board of Trustees.

Financing

Financing is through a combination of tuition revenue and non-governmental donations.

Degrees & Programs

- Ph.D. in Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations
- Doctor of Ministry
- Master of Arts in Religious Studies
- Graduate Certificate in Islamic Chaplaincy
- Graduate Certificate in Imam and Muslim Community Leadership

Partners

Hartford Seminary is a member of the Boston Interreligious Theological Consortium and the Hartford Consortium for Higher Education.

Hartford SEMINARY

Exploring Differences, Deepening Faith

With roots that go back to 1834, Hartford Seminary is a non-denominational graduate school for religious and theological studies. What makes us unique is our multi-faith environment and our proven ability to prepare leaders for the complex world that surrounds us.

who have the knowledge-based necessary for fulfilling the role of an imam, and some which provide specific education for chaplaincy, are not accredited by a regional accrediting body, and therefore are not recognised by the US Department of Education. This means that the credits taken at these institutions do not transfer to accredited institutions, and many employers do not recognise these degrees. Some mosques are willing to hire persons presenting this type of educational background, but other employers such as federal prisons, universities and colleges, the military and hospitals will not hire a graduate of an unaccredited institution. These include the American Islamic College in Chicago, Illinois, the Graduate Theological Foundation in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the Mishkha University in Florida, and California Islamic University in Fullerton, California, as well as the Al-Madina Institute in Duluth, Georgia.

The third category of education that might be considered as providing the requisite knowledge for imams and chaplains consists of institutes that do not purport to offer degrees. They offer courses in Islamic Studies that may provide the basic requisite theological education, but they do not offer any courses related to the practice of chaplaincy or imamship. However,

if one successfully completes courses offered by these institutes, a person might obtain the requisite baseline Islamic knowledge to be hired as an imam.

In addition to these three forms of educational institutions, the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) and the Institute for Clinical Pastoral Training (ICPT) offer clinical experience with didactic components that lead to chaplaincy certification for people of all or no faith. A person desiring to be an Islamic chaplain or imam might acquire CPE units along with a bachelor's or master's degree in Islamic Studies, or having obtained the requisite Islamic background knowledge through a college, university or institute. However, many chaplaincy positions require an appropriate degree from an accredited college or university programme.

4.5. Fields of work and employment of Muslim religious professionals

It is tremendously difficult to get an overview of imams and other Muslim religious leaders in Europe. In most European countries, there are no official data on the numbers of imams and estimates vary greatly. As professionalism is a key indicator in this report, we identify the relationship between education and employment as particularly important. We highlight a number of the similarities that concerns imams and Muslim professionals as they navigate training, employment and some responsibilities.

The numbers: Imams, Muslim educators and other religious professionals in **Italy**, for example, are challenged by the fact that, on the one hand, there is no official list or register of Italian imams and, on the other, there is no information on the number of mosques⁸⁵. Furthermore, the precariousness of

these places of worship, often contested by citizenship or local institutions, makes it even more difficult to focus a representation of their distribution.

For **Switzerland**, the number of imams who work regularly in an Islamic community is estimated at about 130. Many imams obtained a Madrasa education (Islamic higher school education) in Kosovo, North Macedonia, Albania or Bosnia-Herzegovina, or they attended an imam-Hatip school in Turkey, followed by university studies usually in the countries just mentioned, but sometimes in Jordan, Syria, Sudan, Saudi Arabia or at the Al-Azhar in Cairo. There are about 35 imams who are sent to Switzerland by the religious authority Diyanet. Thirteen imams who originate from Bosnia are working full-time, mainly in Bosnian-Muslim communities. Approximately 20

imams work for communities of the Turkish-speaking Association for Islamic Cultural Centres (VIKZ) have completed its internal imam training in Germany⁸⁶.

The Pew Research Center estimated that in 2017 there were 2500 mosques in **France** and between 1200 to 1800 imams. Although the French government accredited imams educated, trained and dispatched by foreign partner states (system of *islam consulaire*)⁸⁷ the majority of imams are not employed by foreign governments. A study conducted by the French Senate in 2016 mentions that only about 300 imams from the estimated 1200 – 1800 have officially been dispatched by Turkey, Algeria and Morocco and are subsequently being employed by these foreign governments⁸⁸.

According to a survey on Islamic Communities in **Germany**, between 1700 and 2500 Islamic religious employees regularly work in a mosque or an Alevi community, including around 60 Alevi dedes⁸⁹. A large percentage of them work at the 986 local mosques of the DITIB. Of particular significance in terms of the number of employed imams are the 'Islamic Community Milli Görüş' (IGMG), with about 320 mosques in Germany and the Association of Islamic Cultural Centers (VIKZ) also with around 300 mosques.

Field of responsibilities: As is the case for imams in most countries, they are mainly paid and supported by the Muslim community. In return, they lead both daily and Friday prayers, deliver sermons, provide funeral prayers and conduct marriages. They also run evening Quran classes for children, where they teach the basic principles of Islam and prayers relating to fasting etc. They also render 'counselling' in family disputes, especially relating to divorce settlements and inheritance. Imams' stipends and facilities are settled by the mosque committees.

Employment: In **Germany**, for example, there are different forms of employment for imams. About 40% of imams are **employed as civil servants by the Turkish religious authority, Diyanet**, and sent to Germany to join the DITIB on a rotating basis for up to five years. They work in Turkish-Muslim communities and are a great financial relief for the mosque because their salaries are being paid by the Turkish government⁹⁰. It differs widely whether imams have German citizenship, a limited or a permanent resi-

dency permit.

Another group of imams are employed by the specific community and **paid by the respective mosque**. Their salaries vary between 500€ to 2000€ per month, depending on the size and funding of the congregation. Usually, imams live with their families adjacent to the mosque building.

The majority of imams in **France** are not employed by foreign governments, instead, most of them are employed by the specific community itself and either **paid through donations** or through other means by the mosque association. In short, due to its principle of laicity, it is not possible to train imams using public funds in France⁹¹.

Most employed imams in **Switzerland** are **paid by the local Islamic community**, with the exception of the Diyanet imams, who are remunerated by the Turkish state and one imam remunerated by the United Arab Emirates. Many imams, especially among the 40 Albanian-speaking and approximately 20 Arabic-speaking imams, work part-time or even on a voluntary basis. As a result, there are imams who lead the daily evening prayer, but work full-time during the day in a different profession⁹².

For **Denmark**, a Danish report from 2017 demonstrates that most imams working in mosques **are hired on a voluntary basis** and only 33% are hired with a salary. Of the 100 Sunni Muslim mosques surveyed (with a total of 170 mosques in Denmark) about 70% of the imams have a religious education. For those imams permanently residing in Denmark, it is 50%. All Turkish-Islamic Diyanet mosque imams with temporary residency permits in Denmark have a religious education. The report shows – apart from other interesting findings – that imams in Denmark have a wide range of cultural, theological, educational and lingual backgrounds, working in very different mosque environments and contexts.

Belgium has a **direct system of support for the employment of imams**. If a mosque is officially recognised by the Executive of Muslims in Belgium, up to three imams can be allocated to it, depending on the number of prayers and the number of members. In such a case, **the salary of the imams is paid by the Federal Ministry of Justice and by the authorities of the respective province**. Sometimes the

Brussels-Capital Region covers part of the deficit of the mosque and may financially support crucial maintenance works on the building.

There are currently 72 imams salaried by the Ministry of Justice as well as 14 posts for the Executive of Muslims in Belgium. Recently, the federal government has approved the recruitment of 18 preachers and theologians

who would be active directly at the EMB level and not in specific mosques. It must be underlined that the Belgian authorities cannot impose any specific level of education or training on ministers of religion, given the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of religions.

Imam Abdallah Hajjir is talking to mosque visitors, Mosque in Berlin



4.6. Muslim professionals in public institutions – Muslim chaplaincy

Most of the countries surveyed in this report have Muslim professionals, such as chaplains, in public and civic societal sectors. This is particularly significant in Belgium, USA, France, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

While **Muslim chaplaincy is a relatively new concept**, there is an **increasing number of Muslims taking up various chaplaincy roles**, such as in hospitals, prisons, education, the banking sector and the military.

The estimated number of Muslim chaplains in the **UK** totals between 350 and 400. Recent research results

in terms of Christianity. **Chaplaincy and the role of chaplains only emerged in a meaningful way when a substantial number of British-born students entered higher education during the mid-1990s.** Within the **prison service**, this development took a considerable turn when, in 1999, the **government appointed a full-time Muslim adviser to the prison service on Muslim issues.** This led to an **increas-**

ing number of full- and part-time Muslim chaplain appointments. The

increasing presence of UK armed forces in Muslim countries, especially after 9/11, further triggered the appointment of an imam.

As far as a teaching qualification is concerned, the Certificate Course in Muslim Chaplaincy offered by Markfield



Working group at the AIWG Conference 2019: Muslim Chaplaincy

show that there are 98 part-time and full-time Muslim chaplains in the higher education sector. Originally, Muslim chaplaincy was predominately a locally-organised affair, focusing on meeting the basic religious needs of prison inmates and hospital patients. During the 1970s and 1980s, it was mainly a voluntary effort, oriented more to what suited the chaplains than what suited the clients. Within the higher education sector, needs were largely met by the Islamic societies at universities. A mature and religiously conversant student acted as 'chaplain', but without the title; for a long time, the term 'chaplain' was not associated with Muslims, and Muslim students thought about chaplain and chaplaincy only

Institute of Higher Education, MIHE is the first of its kind meeting the increased demand for training chaplains.

In **Belgium**, as in most other countries, **chaplaincies are organised in different sectors.** Most Muslim chaplains are e.g. working at **Belgian penitentiaries** – 27 out of a total of 79 Muslim chaplains (also referred to as 'counsellors'). They are proposed by the Executive of Muslims in Belgium to the penitentiary administrations, which then hire and pay them. They have to attend training sessions organised by the Executive of the Muslims of Belgium (EMB). In the **Belgium Armed Forces**, there is currently

one Muslim chaplain and his deputy. Up to now, they were selected through a specific internal procedure. Hospitals in Belgium also provide religious and moral assistance to their patients. A few Muslim chaplains are offering their services in those fields of hospitals and military.

In the **Netherlands**, the **training and deployment of Muslim Chaplains has been continuously expanded** in recent years. **About 38 Muslim spiritual caretakers or chaplains (*Islamitische Geestelijke Verzorgers*) were employed by 2017 by the Ministry of Justice** under the auspices of the 'contact body' Muslims and Government (Contactorgaan Moslims en Overheid). Forty percent were of Turkish descent, 40% of Moroccan descent, and 20% of other origins (12 different countries of origin). During the same year, two Muslim chaplains were employed by the Ministry of Defence. Several dozen Muslim chaplains are employed in hospitals, often on a part-time basis. There is no information available on the number of privately employed Muslim spiritual caretakers.

Chaplaincy in public institutions in Switzerland is provided (and largely financed) by the religious communities that are recognised under public law⁹³. There are considerable differences between the cantons with regard to the legal regulations. In the canton of Geneva, for example, the Cantonal Hospital of Geneva has concluded its own agreements with the three officially recognised churches as well as the Jewish, Islamic and Christian Orthodox communities to provide pastoral care⁹⁴. In the canton of St Gallen, the umbrella association Islamic Organisations in Eastern Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein (*Dachverband islamischer Gemeinden in der Ostschweiz und des Fürstentums Lichtenstein*, DIGO) initiated talks with the Cantonal Hospital of St Gallen, which lead to a six-day training course and the service of six (volunteer) Muslim chaplains at the hospital⁹⁵. Many hospitals and prisons in Switzerland at least keep lists of imams and Muslim volunteers to ensure a minimum of service by Muslim chaplains⁹⁶. Muslim chaplains in Switzerland have often attended one of the continuing education courses in Switzerland. Only very few are employed on a full-time basis, such as the Muslim chaplain at Pöschwies prison, the largest penal institution for male inmates in Switzerland. He is paid by the canton. In addition, QuaMS finances two Muslim chaplains at the Federal Asylum Centre Juch in Zurich (30% and 40%), a secretary (30%), an assistant (40%) and a director (80%). Most other Muslim chaplains, whether in prisons or hospitals, are volunteers or paid on a time and material basis⁹⁷.

MUSLIM CHAPLAINS IN THE FRENCH ARMY

The development of Muslim chaplaincy in France began with the presence of Muslim soldiers within the French army during the First World War and later with harkis, who were native Algerians serving as auxiliaries in the French Army during the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962). Thus, 'in two centuries, thousands of soldiers of Muslim religion and culture served France from 1802 to 1962'⁹⁸.

Even if the presence of Muslim chaplains was not officially sanctioned from the very beginning, the troops of Muslim soldiers still had imams who could offer them spiritual guidance and ensure the celebration of prayers and religious festivals⁹⁹. In 1920, 'a first Muslim chaplain was appointed and assigned to the North African units detached to Syria, but the military elites of that time judged his action as unfavourable to French interests and dismissed him three years later'¹⁰⁰.

The Muslim chaplaincy in the French Armed Forces today includes 38 full-time active military chaplains and 7 reserve chaplains¹⁰¹, the latter of which can be 'summoned in case of need, additional activities or to replace chaplains on leave'¹⁰². The military chaplains carry out their missions under the national command of a chief chaplain who operates with 6 regional chaplains (Ile de France, North-East, West, South, South-West and South-East), 27 force chaplains and 4 deputy chaplains (Land, Air, Navy and Gendarmerie).

Despite the strict laicism in **France** which says that 'the Republic does not recognize, pay, or subsidize any religious sect', a fundamental right to have access to perform a religion is constitutionally guaranteed. In the **French Armed Forces**, for example, there is a **long tradition of having chaplains**. Most are Catholic, some are Protestant or Jewish, but there are also about 45 Muslim chaplains, as there is a significant minority of Muslims in the French Armed Forces¹⁰³. These are directed by the Chief Chaplain – or 'General Chaplain' – to the Muslims of the French Armed Forces.

In other countries, like **Italy, Denmark, Norway and Sweden**, the **inclusion of imams or other religious professionals for pastoral caring services in public institutions** such as hospitals (for spiritual assistance to the sick or for rites related to peri-mortem and post-mortem) or schools (for training in religious dialogue) **can still be described as sporadic, unsystematic and linked to the sensitivity and the welfare tradition of the different national states**.

4.7. Chaplaincy in the United States

In the **US American context**, it has been verified that **Muslim chaplains serve in at least 68 institutions of higher education, such as colleges and universities**, including very prestigious institutions, such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, New York University, MIT and the University of California, Los Angeles. While the majority of the institutions fund their chaplain's offices, a few are privately funded by Muslim communities. Some colleges have volunteer chaplain positions, in which they provide an office, a college ID card, a parking space etc, but they do not pay the Muslim chaplain a salary (and are represented as such).

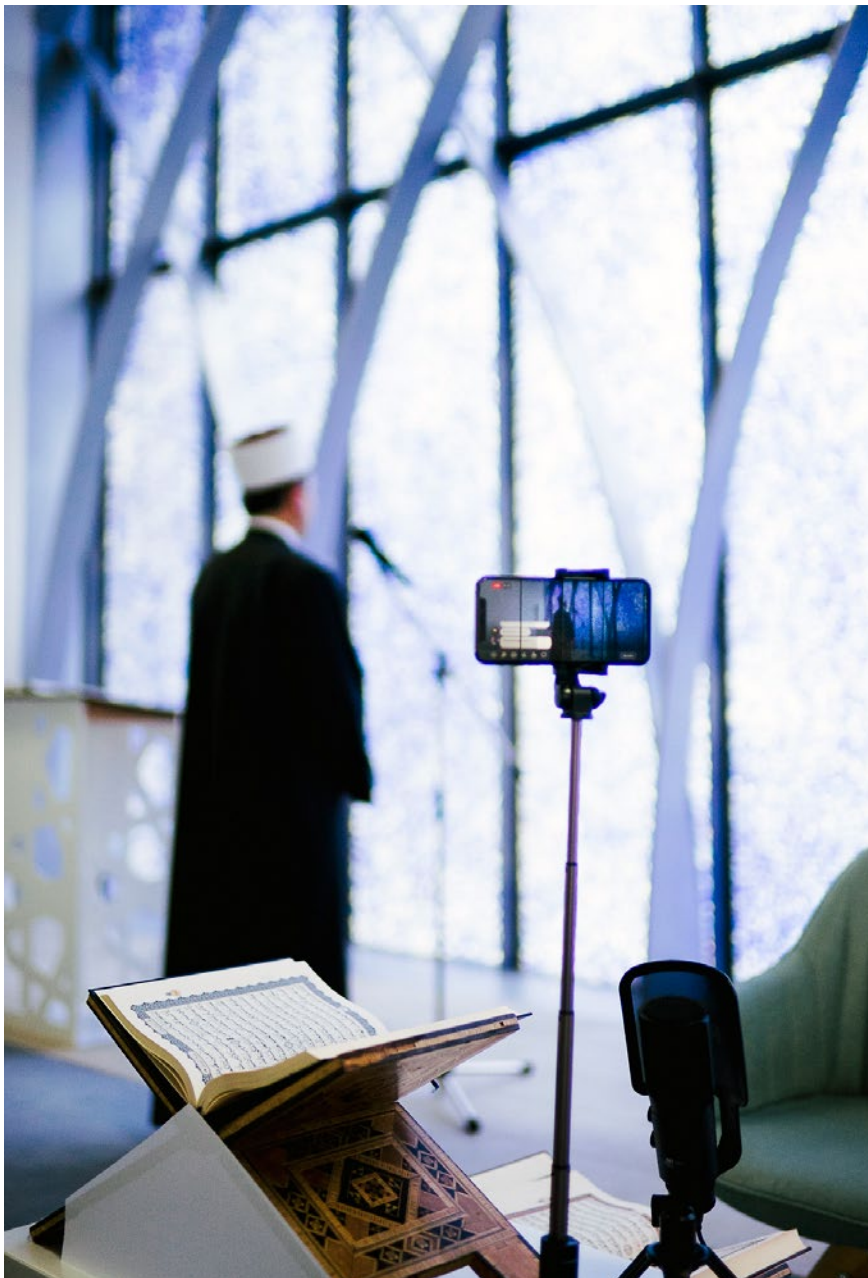
Currently, there are five Muslim chaplains known to be serving in the American military and one serving with the Veterans Administration. According to the State Department of Correction and based on specific data on where Muslim chaplains serve in the correctional system, Muslim chaplains are probably serving in prisons and correction facilities in the majority of the populous states, such as California, which is believed to have more than 20 Muslim chap-

lains. There is verified data of Muslim chaplains serving in state prisons in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Florida, Texas, California, Michigan and Illinois. However, there are likely other states with Muslim chaplains of which we are not certain. There are about 11 Muslim chaplains in the Federal Bureau of Prisons in California, New York, New Jersey, Michigan, North Carolina and South Carolina. Muslim chaplains serve in a number of hospitals and medical facilities. According to the Association of Muslim Chaplains, there are currently about 40 such associated imams. However, there are many more hospitals and medical facilities that employ Muslim chaplains throughout the United States.

5. Examples of pathbreaking approaches

The development of education and training of imams and other Muslim professionals in Europe and North America has been ongoing since the second half of the twentieth century, but in the last decade, this process gained importance, resulting in an expansion and intensification of these efforts in most European countries.

On the basis of the accumulated experience from different countries, with special attention to innovations in the field and practical solutions, we will henceforth sum up what has proven to work well and the reasons why.



Imam Benjamin Idriz is streaming the prayer, Penzberg Mosque, Germany.

Whereas each country has stand-alone examples of best (and most likely, worst) practice, on the basis of the input from the country correspondents, a number of general observations can be made on what is common to the best experiences and successes.

5.1. The importance of cooperation

Most of the country reports **underline the importance of degrees of cooperation between public institutions, Islamic organisations and later employers** to hire the graduates in the process of establishing sustainable and widely accepted domestic training programmes for Muslim religious personnel. This **tripartite model** seems to constitute the best practice standard of cooperation in successfully building imam and Muslim professional training and education.

The **two most significant examples** connected with this are the **Swiss continuing education course on Muslim chaplaincy** and counselling in an interreligious context and the **Dutch training programme on Professionalisation of Imams in the Netherlands** that builds exactly on shared ownership.

As one of the few education or training offers in Switzerland, the education course 'Muslim Chaplaincy and Counselling in an Interreligious Context' at the **Swiss Center for Islam and Society (SZIG/CSIS)** provides important basic skills for chaplaincy and

counselling to prospective Muslim chaplains for their work in different fields and institutions.

Muslim chaplains trained in this manner are **generally well-received in Muslim communities**, which is due to the fact that the project and the continuing education course arose from the specific needs of



Bilal Ansari, Hartford Seminary USA, talking to state officials.

the community. On the other side, they are **accepted as skilled providers by public institutions**. Muslim chaplains that have undergone this training are also **well received by other professionals, such as the nursing staff at hospitals**. Muslim chaplaincy is still unknown to many Swiss Muslims and needs further explanation to the clientele. Feedback from

recipients so far has been very good, including more or less religious recipients and those less familiar with the chaplaincy. The diversity in the team of Muslim chaplains in terms of knowledge of different languages and cultural backgrounds helps them to relate to patients who are otherwise difficult to reach for ordinary staff.

Similarly, the “**Professionalisation of Imams in the Netherlands” (PIN) Training Programme** is situated at the VU Amsterdam and was established from the very beginning in close cooperation with both the Representative Council of Muslims in the Netherlands (CMO) and the Council of Moroccan Mosques in the Netherlands (RMMN). The course offers an intensive practice-based training to Muslim students.

This Dutch example **ensures that an officially recognised training programme, by striving for shared ownership, can be acceptable to all parties** (e.g. Muslim organisations, educational institute(s) and the government). A bottom-up approach in which individual Muslim organisations set up training facilities on their own, which are mostly limited to their own members, creates a fragmented educational landscape. At present, this is more often than

not the case. Moreover, there is a lack of trust and recognition within the social and political environment. In some instances, this is due to the differing standards of education, or fears that conservative imams trained only within some Islamic communities and with limited competencies would be unable to deal with the complex societal issues.

With an exclusively top-down approach, on the other hand, the Muslim organisations experience difficulties because of a lack of ownership and connectivity to the generally more or less practised religious tradition. A more sustainable model therefore should be based on **a mixed model of shared ownership, which is aimed at cooperation, shared experiences and knowledge as well as compromise**. Such a mixed model would fit into Dutch university practice, where seminaries from various religions train their religious leaders in academic and postmaster programmes.

5.2. The importance of context

Context is important, whether in a **specific country, institutional or organisational setting**. Many correspondents highlight the national context, the regulatory context, the cultural context, the academic context or the secular contexts as particularly significant for an appropriate educational programme for Muslim religious professionals. Often this is provided as an additional training meant to expand the theological knowledge with further competencies and insights into different social and institutional fields.

The **Belgian example** particularly stresses the **combination of the theological aspect** needed to provide the required assistance to the faithful, on the one hand, and the overarching **cultural and institutional knowledge, on the other** – in order to complement and adapt it to the Belgian social context¹⁰⁴.

In this regard, the framework now set up around the Academy for Training and Research in Islamic Studies, AFOR (Académie de formation et de recherche en études islamiques), appears to be the most viable option when moving forward in Belgium. The theological component is entirely provided by AFOR, as related to the Executive of Muslims in Belgium and the main Muslim representative organisations. Additionally, the first university certificate, ‘Religions and societies’, encompasses an introduction to social psychology, an introduction to religious sociology, secularism and secularisation in Europe, citizenship and religion, history and current issues in Church-state relations. The other university certificate, entitled ‘Islam and living together’, focuses on a better knowledge of the diversity of Belgian society and deals mainly with human rights, analysis of religious discourse on the internet and the history of religious

conflicts. In **Italy**, a first significant and innovative endeavour is the **Master programme in Studies on Islam in Europe**, which is offered at the University of Padua. The first institutional training course explicitly and exclusively dedicated to imams in Italy is the **Advanced Training Course (Corso di Alta Formazione) for imams and murshidat** provided at the University of Padua within the aforementioned PriMED project, during the academic year 2018/2019. The course is targeted 'at persons who carry out, within Muslim communities, the role of Imam and Murshida', with the aim 'to update / train religious operators to act as guides of religious communities and as facilitators and mediators in relations among the believers and social organizations, institutional bodies and private and public service-providing agencies (schools, hospitals, prisons, etc.)'.

The course is structured into five thematic macro-areas: Cultural diversity, religious pluralism and intercultural mediation; Islamic sciences: foundations and trends; Society, law and Islam in Europe; Interculture, identity and citizenship; Radicalization and social inclusion policies. The originality of the course lies in the fact that it enhances the theological knowledge in the Islamic sciences in a secular university context, and puts students in a dialogue with other disciplinary fields such as the human and social sciences, for instance, the legal sciences, historiography and intercultural approaches. This course activates and fosters a process of reflexivity concerning the theoretical and methodological devices and the knowledge embodied in the participants' daily practices,

promoting opportunities for reflection and awareness development with respect to the European and Italian context.

While there are no state universities teaching Islamic theology as a subject in **France**, the French government has established study programmes in '**Politics, Religion and Laicity**' at 18 universities since 2008¹⁰⁵. It is primarily aimed at imams sent from abroad. Imams who take part in such a programme are usually awarded an accredited university degree after successfully completing courses covering topics such as France citizenship, laicity, political structures, democracy and judicial issues. They do not explicitly cover any theological or religious matters; instead, the **aim is to integrate foreign imams more closely into the French context**, as there are treaties obligating imams from Algeria, Turkey and Morocco to complete such a course¹⁰⁶.

5.3. The importance of specialisation in Islamic knowledge

In his preface to the 2018 edited volume on Imams in Western Europe, Jørgen S. Nielsen **highlights the importance of the Islam-specific content and framework**. While the **basics tenets of traditional Islamic knowledge and sciences must remain central, this cannot stand alone in the European context**. This is not just **to secure a basic degree of authenticity**, but also to reflect thoroughly on the need for this form of training as well as the resonance with the communities that support the training and education.

*'... to train new imams, one might as well send trainees to a Protestant or Catholic faculty, and focus on all that the religions share – law, pastoral theology, and so on – while replacing the Catholic or the Protestant theology with Islamic theology and religious teachings. These shared skills include the ability to deal with all the new expectations of the community, the Muslim intellectuals both at home and abroad, and state institutions at the local and national level [...] This competence also extends to all of the new skills, tools, and modes of communication that the twenty-first century demands of imams.'*¹⁰⁷ [Nielsen 2018, 14-15]

A reflection that echoes the commonalities across Europe is the need for specialisation in faith-based Islamic studies. Muslim seminaries in the United Kingdom, for instance, have focused on the general skills and needs, but have not considered the need for a further 'specialisation' of graduates. Looking at the nature of Muslim communities **in Europe, a need arises for competent Muslim scholars who not only have a command of Islamic sciences but who are also capable of answering questions relating to current financial issues, medical issues**, and so on. This requires graduates to have a strong grasp and knowledge of economic and financial issues alongside Islamic and medical knowledge and Islamic sciences.

These requirements have to be contextual, subject related and grounded in Islamic tradition. Graduates will then have 'weight' in both the community and amongst their colleagues in the public institutions. Without this, Muslims in Europe and North America will have to continue consulting Islamic scholars in other nations, who are often times neither qualified nor in a position to address the specific issues confronting the local Muslim communities.

The only place for further specialisation on a high level are institutions of higher education inside Europe, the USA and Canada. In Germany, the university faculties for Islamic-theological studies now offer a space for Muslim scholars to further develop knowledge in different fields and take part in an academic discourse with theologians of other religions and other disciplines. But there is still a lack of recognition and acceptance from Muslim communities for their work and for their staff.

By contrast, the acceptance and receptivity of the work and knowledge produced and circulated by different colleges, such as the previously mentioned Zaitunah College, in the USA, is much higher within the Muslim community.

5.4. The importance of supplementary training offers

Two examples from Germany show different **approaches for offering supplementary education for graduates of Islamic theological studies**; one is a community-based initiative and the other publically funded. The latter is a pilot project started in November 2019 as a kind of **Imam college ('Imamkolleg')** to train and equip Imams to work in German mosque communities.

This relatively new cooperation is the brainchild of several scholars from the Islamic theological studies at the University of Osnabrück and representatives of a few German Muslim associations and could be the first project of its kind to train imams with a link to a German state university. The Central Council of Muslims (Zentralrat der Muslime) is also part of the initiative, while other larger Muslim associations are more critical. The Imamkolleg is primarily aimed at graduates of Islamic Theology at German public universities and intends to further their training with regards to the specific requirements of the imam profession. The location of the college has still not been determined yet. The location in Lower Saxony would profit from a good organisational structure of

Muslims there; about 180 mosque communities are covered by three associations¹⁰⁸.

Furthermore, the Turkish-Islamic Union for religious affairs (DITIB) has recently established its first educational institution to train imams within Germany. Previously, prospective female and male religious leaders (hocas) of the German DITIB communities were educated and further trained solely in Turkey. The first group of students consists/consisted of 22 Bachelor graduates, who predominantly have completed their A-levels in Germany before studying Islamic theology in Turkey. Since 2019, the **DITIB-Academy in Dahlem** offers a two-year programme focusing on practical courses and designed to promote the further qualification of those seeking to enter the imam profession in Germany. Similar to the 'Imamkolleg', it does not consider itself a replacement for a theological study programme. Instead, it is conceived as an additional form of training that provides university graduates with some practical skills needed for this profession¹⁰⁹.

5.5. The importance of role models

Since the professional field of Muslim chaplaincy is relatively new and in most countries still in an early state of development, it is important to highlight and show **individual examples with their experiences**.

For quite some time now, **Naveed Baig** has been **Denmark's only Muslim hospital chaplain**, and one of only two permanent imams employed full time in the entire public sector. Until recently, he led and coordinated 40 volunteers in the Ethnic Resource Team at the 'Kingdom hospital' (*Rigshospitalet*), who act as counsellors and interlocutors for patients and relatives with ethnic minority backgrounds when they are at the hospital. Naveed Baig's closest colleagues

are the church pastors of the Church of Denmark and the health staff. With them, he solves many of the same religious, ethical and interpersonal tasks that priests do.

Naveed Baig holds traditional credentials and has worked as an imam at the Danish Islamic Centre; moreover, he also has a MA from the Faculty of Theology at the University of Copenhagen and is the first Muslim in Denmark to have taken a master's degree in pastoral care¹¹⁰. Currently, he is pursuing a PhD at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Oslo. In addition to performing prayers, rituals and teaching, as many other imams do, Islamic pastoral care is the

core task for Naveed Baig and other imams affiliated with public institutions. They help Muslims through life crises and are religious guides when spiritual and existential questions arise. His work is about life and death, about insecurity, anxiety and in general the spiritual, existential and religious dilemmas. Baig



Naveed Baig, Denmark

sees this role as his most important, and in a Danish context, it is a key example of integrating accountability, professionalism and diversity into everyday life and practice. His work was portrayed in the documentary 'Imam at the Kingdom' on Danish Radio National Television¹¹¹.

In 2017, the **Norwegian imam Najeed ur Rehman Naz** became the **first Muslim military chaplain** to be hired in a Nordic country following a two-year pilot project in the military, working alongside a humanist chaplain who today is also employed in the Norwegian military¹¹². To the surprise of many, he is also the first officially hired Muslim chaplain in Norway outside the fields of health care and prison services. Najeed Naz completed his chaplaincy studies in Denmark at the University of Copenhagen, as part of the flexible master programme, which offered a course of 15 ECTS points in Pastoral Care in Islam ('*Sjælesorg i Islam*'). Earlier on, he was trained in traditional Islamic disciplines both in England and Pakistan whilst being attached to a Pakistani mosque in Oslo, where he still delivers the *khutbah* on Fridays. He also finished the religious leader's module offered by the Faculty of Theology at the University of Oslo,

Norway. Naz's case shows that it is possible to bring together and weave traditional and contemporary religious disciplines to fit the needs of the time. His services to the mosque community, particularly through the *khutbah*, illustrates the different settings that a chaplain must navigate in order to bridge institutions and faith communities. Credibility is central for chaplains in situations and contexts where trust and creating awareness are imperative.

Another excellent example is **Alen Delic, a Swedish imam who works today at Skåne University Hospital in Sweden as an imam and coordinator**. He has studied Islamic studies in Bosnia-Herzegovina, comprising the 'Imam and *khateeb*' homiletics course and *usul al-deen* (literally 'roots of religion') course on Islamic theology. He is employed part-time by the Bosnian community as an imam in Malmö. He started his work at the hospital as a coordinator in 2014, and in 2018 he was given the official title of *sjukhusimam* (hospital chaplain). This means that he is now employed part-time at the hospital by the Swedish Agency for Support to Faith Communities, just like other hospital chaplains from different faiths, who are also funded by the same agency through a nomination process facilitated by their respective faith umbrella organisations¹¹³. Delic completed his chaplaincy studies at the Markfield Institute of Higher Education in Leicester, UK, in 2019. He was immediately integrated into his institution after his appointment, and the hospital administration was keen to send circular letters to the wards informing staff of Delic's appointment and functions. It took him about half a year to introduce himself to specific wards where his outreach would be needed. Delic is part of the chaplaincy team consisting of chaplains from the Church of Sweden, and his office is located inside the offices of the Church of Sweden at the hospital, where he works together and cooperates with his Christian colleagues.

All these examples clearly demonstrate the professional cooperation between a state agency, Church staff and Muslim denominations. The close Christian-Muslim chaplaincy interaction at the hospital, although not unique in Nordic countries, still possesses a strong symbolic value for society at large. This cooperation signifies not just teamwork but also points to new developments where chaplaincy work is becoming more and more a professional discipline. Here competencies

represent the core and may in the future be more skill-oriented than faith based, as seen, for example, in Canada and the Netherlands.

Common to these examples of Scandinavian pioneers in the young profession of Muslim chaplaincy seems to be that **they have both significant authority within their respective Muslim community** and are also **recognised for their expertise by the public institutions**. This is certainly linked to the fact they are, on the one hand, **well trained in the Islamic disciplines**, and, on the other, trained in theology, spiritual care or chaplaincy at a European university of higher education. Moreover, they have **sought continuing education programmes** and new experi-

ences in this relatively young field, wherever they can find it. Finally, and this is where things are now, they have each in their way helped to build up the institutional setting for their work. **By means of a process of trial and error, they are gradually becoming authorities through the delegation of responsibility and trust from their public employers**, in close relation to their Christian peers.

5.6. Learning from the American Long-term experience

Both imam and chaplaincy education and training programmes that have worked well share some **combination of secular and religious education**, all with a **focus on the contextual application of knowledge and praxis**. The positive impact has been the **sustained presence of Muslim leadership in North American institutions for over 40 years**. In this context, Islam as a religion and Muslim chaplains and imams as professionals are mutually recognised as equal partners in spiritual guidance, development and practice.

One of the best **examples of a Muslim chaplain graduate and university employer is Georgetown University**, the first institution in the US to hire a Muslim chaplain. A Hartford Seminary graduate, **Imam Yahya Hendi** has been well received by the institution and the Muslim community, and he now has expanded his position to include two chaplains in training working under him. Through his excellent entrepreneurial skills, Khalid Latif, a graduate of **New York University (NYU)**, has created one of the most diverse, equitable and inclusive chaplaincies in America. The Islamic Centre at NYU has grown under Latif's leadership to include 8 staff members, 2 psychologists, 2 resident scholars, a Shi'i chaplain and a few associate chaplains. Former Mayor Michael

Bloomberg also appointed Latif the Muslim chaplain for the NYPD in 2005.

Overall, the impact of the Hartford Seminary Master of Arts, coupled with the certificate in Islamic chaplaincy, allows graduates to work in colleges, universities, police departments, hospitals and other medical facilities, not to mention in the Canadian and US militaries, as well as in state and federal prisons throughout the nation.

Based on the successes – and less successful cases – it seems that to be an effective imam or chaplain a person needs to have at least an education equivalent to a Master of Arts or Master of Divinity with the rigor required by both the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and regional accrediting bodies.

The areas of study should include appropriate distributions of course and fieldwork as established in the most successful Masters of Arts or Masters of Divinity and Certificate programmes in accredited institutions in a number of important areas.

Various individual examples of successful Muslim chaplains (and their work) in Europe and the United States show that the expansion of this new professional field and their fields of work grow in connection with committed persons. These tend to be people who are well-educated in both traditional Islamic studies and other relevant disciplines and

who are well networked and accepted within their community and the public institutions.

SUGGESTIONS FOR REQUIRED MINIMIUMS FOR TRAINING MUSLIM RELIGIOUS PROFESSIONALS

Based on their work at the Islamic Chaplaincy Program and Faculty Associate in Muslim Pastoral Theology at the Hartford Seminary (USA), Dr Bilal Ansari and Dr Colleen Keyes propose the following requirements that should be included in the education of Muslim religious leaders in the following fields:

Scripture:

Practical (recitation and memorisation) and Theoretical (hermeneutic/exegetical)

This prerequisite includes the study of scripture with a focus on technical competencies for recitation and memorisation of the Qur'anic text as well as the study of the language of the Qur'anic scripture – Arabic – with a focus on grammar and morphology. The goal is to be conversant in variant hermeneutic and exegetical understandings of the sacred scripture for the care of diverse and inclusive Muslim communities within professional institutional settings.

Theology:

Practical (pastoral) and Theoretical (creedal/scholastic)

This requirement focuses on the study of theology with a concentration on the applied sciences for pastoral care and ministry as well as the study of creedal theology, which theoretically contextualises all Islamic theological schools. The aim is to be a compassionate caregiver for a diverse Muslim population and to be ministerially conversant in interreligious dialogue and understanding.

Religious History:

Practical (psychological/sociological) and Theoretical (intellectual/religious)

The study of religious history, with a focus on the psychological and social development of Islam both geographically and in different eras, is crucial for this requirement. The objective is to understand the origins of medieval Muslim religious history for the ability to navigate engagement and pastoral care in modern and postmodern institutional context.

Arts of Ministry:

Practical (counselling, liturgical) and Theoretical (congregational/institutional)

In this case the focus lies on the study of the arts of ministry with a concentration on the practical techniques and skills of effective counselling and homiletics. The ambition is to gain mastery of abilities to listen compassionately, lead wisely, and shepherd individuals, communities and institutions.

Education at the graduate certificate level entails a deeper focus on the demonstration of ministry in a particular field of research inquiry and chaplaincy praxis. The goal is to demonstrate mastery of both the arts and sciences mentioned above under a professional supervisor working in the field as a master shepherd within their institution. This is best accomplished with a faculty advisor who has travelled this professional path, mastering both the arts and sciences of Islamic chaplaincy.

6. Major challenges

Best practices cannot stand alone. Regardless of all other challenges that face Muslims and Islamic communities in Europe, a number of specific issues to overcome present themselves.

Lecture in Ramadan in Al-Falah Mosque Berlin (Germany)



6.1. Accreditation, recognition and institutional embeddedness

- The main challenge facing many imams and other Muslim religious professionals in Europe today, as the case of Italy highlights, is that there is an **urgent need to work on the prerequisites that will make overcoming the current marginalised condition** possible. This would mean ascribing Italian Muslims and their representatives the kind of legitimacy needed to act and negotiate as recognised subjects in the public space. For any movement forward to be possible, then the various challenges in different countries need to be met.
- In a number of countries, the training programmes that are being promoted may not lead to a fully accredited Bachelor or Master or further professional degree. This limits the attractiveness and applicability of the programme, and the graduates would not be able to apply for jobs in local authorities or associations that require a full university degree. In this regard, the attractiveness of this occupational field for Muslim religious professionals is sometimes considered limited. This discourages competent young people from embarking on such a career path. Therefore a better, **more comprehensive conceptualisation of such programmes should take place, the accreditation process should be adjusted to the needs of the young Muslim communities and job vacancies should be connected to a successful passing of respective programmes.**
- The case of Belgium shows that the fact that salaries are paid by the public authorities in recognised mosques offer some guarantees in terms of career. As a prerequisite for an application for a professional job vacancy, a successfully completed university course could be an adequate levy/formidable obstacle. It is worth noting that this will be of little interest to non-recognised mosques, especially those that do not want to be recognised. For the latter, the graduates of AFOR might even be perceived as the agents of interference on behalf of the Belgian government.
- In Denmark, it has primarily been the NGO Islamic-Christian Study Center (*Islamisk-Kristent Studiecenter, IKS*) that has borne the main responsibility for starting care services for minority populations and teaching staff about religious and intercultural subjects in prisons and hospitals¹¹⁴. The challenge in Denmark, in particular, will be how to integrate different faith and belief groups in institutions when it seems that religion altogether is slowly being ‘pulled out’ of public institutions and even the historical monopoly of the church is under pressure. Negative and stigmatising debates on Islam and Muslims in Denmark are not only feeding islamophobia but also an **anti-religious climate** that may have an impact on chaplaincy discussions in the future.
- In **Norway, work with institutionalised Muslim chaplaincy has been more ad hoc and locally based.** Trondheim Hospital started by hiring a cultural consultant with a Bosnian background in 2010. The current cultural consultant has an Arab background and is employed by the hospital where his function/task is now rooted in the chaplaincy service¹¹⁵. A hospital in Bergen hired a part-time imam in 2018, and he also works with the church office located on the hospital premises¹¹⁶.
- While ad hoc employment may be a good and positive sign of fruitful local relations, it also has the potential to expose the lack of Muslim organisational skills to create national models for chaplaincy as well as to engage and cooperate with authorities to structure chaplaincy on a professional scale. For all Denmark, Norway and Sweden, **the challenges include building sufficient recognition and capacity at public sector institutions** to achieve a sustainable and broadly based recognised pastoral service to Muslims. This **requires documenting Muslim chaplaincy work and the experiences of Muslim chaplains**, which subsequently can give practical theology new forms and insights.
- In **Switzerland**, challenges regarding the establishment of imam education and Islamic chaplain-

cy training are manifold. One major challenge is directly connected to the structural conditions: **Switzerland is characterised, on the one hand, by a federal political system – that is, a high degree of decentralised governance – and elements of direct democracy.** This division in terms of (federal, cantonal or local) responsibilities must be taken into account, as there is a certain tension between cantonal and federal politics. While the Confederation, for example, is responsible for chaplaincy for asylum seekers and the army, the cantons are in most cases responsible for chaplaincy in other institutions. On the other hand, there is a certain fragmentation due to three main language regions (German, French, Italian)¹¹⁷. The linguistic fragmentation becomes significant if one takes into consideration the relatively small number of imams and Chaplains in Switzerland compared with neighbouring countries.

- The **issue of accreditation and recognition** features most prominently in the **US-American** discussion. One major structural problem is that employers, such as the federal prisons, require 80 graduate credits from regionally accredited institutions, which is a master of divinity and additional field education before a chaplain is hired. **Such education is expensive.** Hartford Seminary and Bayan-Claremont/Chicago Theological are the only accredited programmes designed to meet that requirement. The military generally requires the same, and one must, of course, be a member of the military, thus decreasing the number of chaplains who will/can serve in that capacity. However, a female Army Muslim chaplain was recently hired via the Catholic university's pre-existing relationship with the military. Often institutions will find ways to work around training and degree requirements. Military and federal prisons often find equivalencies to meet their particular needs. The pay and benefits in chaplaincy is highest in the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP), but the cost of the requisite education is also high. On top of this, there are fewer than a dozen full-time positions nationally. Comparatively speaking, the pay and compensation in the military, where requirements and the costs of meeting/associated with them are high, is considerable. By contrast, while colleges and universities often have lower entry standards for employment positions, the compensation at such institutions is considerably lower. Thus,

instead of insisting on highly qualified graduates of degree programmes in Islamic chaplaincy, these colleges and universities sometimes hire as chaplains underemployed faculty, culturally Muslim staff, spouses of faculty or staff, and in some cases Muslim student leaders who have not yet graduated. This means that a number of people serving as chaplains lack the sufficient education and chaplaincy training to be able to fulfil their role in the best manner. Hospital chaplaincy generally offers a moderate income and level of benefits if it is a full-time position. Such a high level of education and the long period of training for hospital chaplaincy full-time positions favours those who can afford years of graduate and clinical education before providing a decent, liveable salary.

- **Currently, chaplaincy may be a more attractive career for women desiring to play a role in spiritual guidance in pluralistic environments and where women can exercise religious leadership in a recognised profession.** The number of Muslim women chaplains is on the rise, and the number of Muslim women chaplains hired in colleges, universities, and hospitals is also increasing.



Award of diploma to students of the Al Ghazali Institute Paris

6.2. Recruitment and working conditions

While there are a number of opportunities for imams and Muslim religious professionals with higher educational degrees throughout Europe, a host of challenges remain.

- First, the **general application and hiring process for job vacancies** in the field of religious-based services lacks procedural standards. Apart from Turkish-Islamic Diyanet mosques, where imams are assigned by the Turkish religious authority on the basis of a standardised recruiting process, there is in most Muslim communities no formalised job market and no unified process of how job vacancies inside the communities are advertised. Depending on the specific needs of a given community, for example, special language skills, it can be very difficult to find suitable candidates. More often than not, mosque representatives have to rely on recommendations or personal relationships to find an adequate number of candidates. Linked to this, there are seldom standardised application procedures such as a job interview and written application documents. This makes it very difficult to assess the qualifications of

an applicant beforehand. Again, Diyanet imams are the exception in this context, as they have to pass a formal application and assessment process in Turkey. Having said that, this process does not involve the specific community they are then eventually sent to¹¹⁸.

- Second, **the working conditions of imams are below average**. There are no unions or organisations specifically representing their interests, and often there are no labour securities such as a contractual dismissal protection. In a number of cases, the precariousness of their position is even more severe as their right of residency/residency status is linked to their employment. Most significantly, salaries are very low. In order to be able to cover living expenses and care for families, imams often have to take up additional work and look for secondary employ-

ment¹¹⁹. Specifically regarding imams, the educational paths and forms of employment in **Switzerland** and elsewhere are very diverse. As a result, possible education and training offers for those imams already working in Switzerland must take into account this diversity. Furthermore, there is a strong public focus on imams rather than extending the target group to other Muslim actors, most of whom are already active in Muslim communities.

This point also raises the **gender issue**. According to the prevailing understanding of most Muslims, the office of the imam is reserved for men. In many communities, however, women are employed as teachers, as members of the board or have various other duties. In addition, Muslim women often express the desire for more services for women in the communities that could also be provided by women. The current practice in Switzerland and other countries of only granting residency permits to the central religious caregiver makes it difficult to recruit women from third (non-EU) countries for various tasks within communities.

• Third, but no less important, **public and political discussions** about imams and the education offers resulting from them are too **often dominated by integration or security policy issues**. If integration, security and religious policy are too strongly linked to them, there is a danger of entrusting imams with tasks that they can only partially or hardly fulfil¹²⁰.

A Typology of employment of imams and Muslim professionals¹²¹

Government or municipal employees	These are chaplains or publicly salaried imams who work specifically in public institutions, such as hospitals, prisons or universities. While many carry out worship services, the main responsibility is spiritual care. These are trained, publicly salaried and accountable as all other sector employees. This category includes other Muslim professionals, e.g. specialists in Islamic psychology or education.
Organisational imams or professionals	These are imams, religious leaders, members of the board, educators or other professionals employed directly by an organisation, either nationally or bilaterally. The imams associated with the Diyanet, the Moroccan government or similar are included here.
Mosque or congregation imams and preachers	These are imams or prayer leaders (<i>khatib</i>), who are either locally employed or merely associated with a mosque or prayer room. These may be salaried to some degree or volunteer. Their background and training vary greatly, yet most are <i>hafiz</i> or have basic training.
Ad hoc imams and preachers	Some imams and preachers are only very loosely associated with a mosque or prayer room. Some lead the prayer ad hoc, some do prayers on special occasion and others may give a sermon as guest speakers on a particular subject. These are seldomly salaried and their background and training vary greatly: everything from people with no formal training to those with a great deal of expertise.

6.3. Unity and diversity in questions of theology

Almost every European country as well as the USA and Canada are confronted with the **difficulties brought about by the diversity of the various denominations, theological schools and religious associations within Islam**. It is still not yet clear **how students are to be trained to deal with Muslim believers from another denomination or legal school**. Recruitment of teaching staff for the theological departments at public universities is therefore a challenge.

In the French context, the lack of unity and quality of study programmes teaching Islamic theology in private institutions is significant. Due to the governing principle of laicity, a state-led quality assurance and standardisation is not possible in France. This means that in many cases, institutes for training

religious personnel do not adhere to basic academic standards and principles of scientific examination¹²². Moreover, the university study programmes established with a focus on the concept of laicity do not include any theological nor pedagogical elements and can therefore only really serve as a complementing part to a relevant university study. Consequently, their success has been limited at best, and they are continuously being criticised both inside and outside Muslim communities¹²³. Theoretically, there is a possibility of introducing a chair of Islamic theology at the University of Strasbourg, which already houses programmes in Catholic and Protestant theology. Strasbourg represents an exception since its location in the region of the 'Elsass' means that the law of laicity does not apply¹²⁴. So far, no such programme has been established there.

6.4. Lack of public authority

Both in the political and public discourses throughout Europe, a **call for distinctly national iterations of 'European Islam'** can often be heard. Particular arguments about 'British Islam,' 'French Islam,' or even 'German Muslims' (rather than Muslims in Germany) has become more and more prominent in recent years. In France, for example, President Macron highlighted the need for **imam training that focuses on the values of the French Republic**¹²⁵. Similarly, the government has given serious consideration to the **idea of establishing a 'Grand Imam'**. In the same vein as the position of 'Grand Rabbi', which was established under Napoleon, this would mean making one imam responsible for the spiritual and religious leadership for all French Muslims¹²⁶. **Such requests on the part of French politicians for a reference person representing Muslims or Muslim communi-**

ties in France is quite difficult to reconcile with the organisational diversity of French Muslims. It is rather improbable that one specific person could be appointed as a kind of representative authority who enjoys the overall acceptance of the different and diverse Muslim religious communities and in addition to it the acceptance of Muslims in common. It is an idea based on the French state's desire for a contact person or representative body regarding religious issues of Muslims in the country that, at the same time, pays little attention to the actual needs and interests of Muslims and Muslim communities in France with regard to religious authority.

The position of 'Grand Imam' in France that both meets the needs of French government and the interests of Muslim communities should come from

the Muslim communities themselves. This would require an initiative on their part to overcome the diversity present within the Muslim communities while simultaneously creating a common understanding of the authority and functions of such a representative – one that might be recognised as an authentic institution by Muslim communities and would probably be welcomed by the French state.

A similar discussion can be observed in other European countries, for example, in the **United Kingdom**. Any attempt to make the future Muslim religious leaders dependent on the political system or changing government is likely to be overreaching and therefore unlikely to work. The independence of such institutions is imperative. Equally important, any political interference or dictate with the syllabus for political purposes may be counterproductive, violate freedom religion and education, and discourage

potential students. Cooperation, full consent and involvement at the local, regional and national levels of the Muslim community is essential. Universities may be able to produce knowledgeable academics in Islamic Studies and further provide balanced, critical allies to the wider society, including to their respective Muslim communities, but they are not in the business of teaching faith-based Islamic religious studies. Graduates of faith-based Islamic sciences, broadly speaking, hold the positions in mosques, deliver sermons every Friday, and issue *fatawa* on social and religious issues of Muslim communities. In Great Britain, all of these tasks are understood to fall exclusively within the domain of Muslim communities and not of the state.

6.5. Lack of funding

All across Europe, the question of **funding and financing represent yet another great challenge**. Private institutions offering imam training are mainly financed through tuition fees and donations. Similarly, mosques are almost entirely dependent on donations to cover their running costs and are usually unable to afford salaries for university-educated graduates to employ them as imams. As a whole, the question of funding for imams is unclear and quite intransparent¹²⁷.

Consequently, imams at a great number of mosques have to find additional employment to make ends meet. They are unable to focus solely on their job as imam and cannot invest enough time to enhance their skills by means of further education and training. Two problematic issues come together at this point, a phenomenon that can, for example, be observed in France—namely, the economic and the psychological dimensions. Thus, as imams, it is impossible to earn enough, forcing them to look for additional financial means to meet the costs associated with basic living conditions. At the same time, the combination of being overworked and unable to ad-

equately concentrate on their jobs as religious staff might contribute to a lack motivation and capacities to invest additional time and energy into their further education.

As the **Swiss** example highlights, **Muslim chaplaincy is to a very large extent carried out by volunteers**. However, chaplaincy is an activity with very high demands. Given the need for ongoing training and supervision, adequate financial compensation for Muslim chaplains is more or less inevitable. Furthermore, Muslim chaplains have no institution to provide them with orientation like other chaplains, apart from the Union of Islamic Organisations in Zurich (VIOZ) and the Quality Assurance of Muslim Chaplaincy in Public Institutions (QuaMS) founded by the canton of Zurich. In most contexts where Muslim chaplaincy exists or is currently under discussion, umbrella organisations such as DIGO – the umbrella organisation of Islamic communities in Eastern Switzerland or UVAM – Union Vaudoise des Associations Musulmanes in the canton of Vaud are contact organisations for Muslim chaplains. Yet they are not quality assurance institutions in the sense that they

manage volunteers and are able to provide continuing support to them¹²⁸. The question of financing poses further challenges. This concerns Islamic communities, which are frequently confronted with the same expectations as the large churches, but often cannot fulfil them due to a lack of funding and professionalisation. The question of financing also arises with regard to imams: some still work on a voluntary basis, while employed imams tend to receive a minimum wage.

6.6. The right balance of expectations and joint ownership

Many of the proposed models and avenues for the future brings with them more challenges or dilemmas.

Without sufficient ownership of the diverse Muslim community, the training model is likely to fail. The same holds if the university is the only partner to carry the financial risks, without the involvement of the Muslim community or the government. If the government expects a 'specific kind of Islam', the training model will fail, as it miscredits itself as a means for 'governmentality' and securitisation of Muslims. Ultimately, if the new and experimental training programmes are not able to converge educational approaches based in 'Western' and Islamic academic traditions, they will surely fail. The point with these challenges is that it takes time and patience to build trust and shared ownership.

Professionalisation of training prepares imams for a societal contribution across sectors, and should be supported to do so, depending on their starting point. However, it is important to distinguish between training for community-based imams who require special courses that provide them with contextual knowledge and tools for working as we see in the **Netherlands**, and training for those students who have attended high schools in Europe and now want to study to become a Muslim religious professional working with the Muslim communities and who then additionally would need a solid faith-based study of

Islamic studies. **The societal fields in which Muslim professionals are needed will quickly grow in the coming years.** Any higher-level Islamic education should take that into account, and a sole focus on the imams of the mosques would fail to understand the breadth of Muslim professionals. Moreover, such a focus on the imams of the mosques lacks a gender perspective.

Furthermore, as a profession in European countries, chaplaincy is still not accepted and understood among Muslims as a religiously connotated service. Until chaplaincy is understood as a needed, valued vocation related to their religious believe, it is unlikely to attract well-qualified Muslims who are willing and able to afford the high cost of the requisite education. As the situation in the United States demonstrates, graduates and students of the Hartford Seminary have successfully obtained full-time chaplaincy positions at high-profile, prestigious institutions of higher education such as Georgetown, Yale, Princeton, Wesleyan and Duke University, and Williams, Bard, and Trinity Colleges as well as the Federal Bureau of Prisons, many state prisons, hospitals and the American military. In so doing, they filled a gap and have become an equal part in those institutions and social fields which, with their work and service, contribute to the well-being of society.





7. Recommendations

In this report, we have presented and discussed the state of affairs regarding the training and education of imams and Muslim professionals, the best practice examples and inspirations as well as the major challenges based on previous experience. It shows that the issue concerning the training and education of Muslim professionals is currently on the political agenda of most European countries. This underlines the point that it is a common 'public issue' across Europe. Thus, the search for solutions requires and would benefit from a comparative approach, a 'best practices' approach and, possibly, a number of joint initiatives.

7.1. Relations between the state and Muslim communities

Dialogue and Cooperation between Muslim Communities and the State should gradually lead to building trust and recognition.

7.1.1. The importance for dialogue platforms between the state and Muslim communities

The importance of the relations between state, church and religion is difficult to overestimate. The relationship, experiences, opportunities and difficulties of the more established religious communities with the state and governing institutions layout the framework of possibilities for Muslim communities in terms of recognition, support and legislation.

This holds true for the (National Church based) establishment-type countries, such as Denmark and the United Kingdom, where specific church communities enjoy an official or traditionally founded relationship with the state. This also concerns the more cooperation-based models, such as the German one, and even the secularist countries, such as France, have a higher degree of cooperation with religious communities. Everywhere, these relations need to be developed and strengthened in order to advance the process of further inclusion of Muslims in European countries.

SUGGESTIONS FOR A MORE SUSTAINABLE COOPERATION BETWEEN STATE AND MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

- First, **an increase in the level of institutionalisation of Muslim communities and joint councils** must take place at the national, federal or federal state (eg Canton) level to offer concise representation to the state – a development that would mutually benefit of state and Muslim communities. This is not just a matter of building representative councils; it also means embedding Muslim professionals in the appropriate public sector institutions, where they may serve to benefit both community, society and other serving professionals.
- Second, **dialogue councils between state officials and Muslim community representatives on equal footing** are needed to ensure a trusting and responsible exchange. Such councils would not just serve as conduits for the exchange of ideas, communication and policy, but also for conflict resolution and joint solutions to emerging challenges and threats.
- Third, steps have to be made according to each legal and constitutional framework for the **official recognition of Muslim communities**, similar to what has been done for smaller churches and other faith communities.
- Fourth, **access to funding possibilities and involvement of the Muslim community in important state or societal activities** should be improved, similar to inclusion of other groups of society.

On a solid basis of cooperation, solutions should be worked out with regard to the development of innovative domestic training for Muslim religious personnel, to the evaluation and recognition of community based programmes and regarding the improvement of awareness and acceptance of Muslim professionals within communities and the broader society:

The experience of other minority religious communities, in particular Christian and Jewish communities, may provide a number of viable strategies when considering the option of building imam training and Muslim professional education which are recognised officially and accepted both publicly and inside Muslim communities.

These strategies may be simply to learn from the experiences of other religious communities, to follow institutional paths of least resistance, to put demonstrated successes to use in a specific Muslim context or even to lobby for rights and support not previously gained. Such strategies may be accomplished by sharing in the broader relationship with Christian, Jewish and other religious communities.

Within the process of common discussion of providing appropriate domestic training programmes for Muslim religious Community personnel, it is important to evaluate the quality of existing

private, community-based institutions for the training of Muslim religious personnel, which are mostly linked to specific needs of Muslim umbrella organisations or specific denominations. Once this has been accomplished, then the search can begin for ways of accrediting their curricula and for recognising them according to standards by means of which, for example, training institutions for Jewish or smaller Christian denominations are approved.

It also remains crucial to commonly discuss ways to **improve the awareness and acceptance of Muslim professionals within communities and in broader society.** While imams seem central to Muslim community life, there needs to be a greater degree of transparency and accountability for their work, both within the community and in society.

Regarding chaplains, many Muslims may not even be aware that they are there and available. To improve awareness and acceptance is to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities and services in their communities as well as in public institutions. To do this, traditional religious theology as well as modern communication skills, expertise and methods have to be included in a comprehensive curriculum of imam training and Muslim professional education.

7.1.2. State funding

As spelled out earlier in this report, state support (in general) and funding (in particular) represent a major hurdle. Recommendations regarding imam training and education is simple in principle, yet proves quite difficult in practice.

It depends on the constitutionally legitimate possibilities for each state to support certain activities as well as aspects of religious and cultural activities of religious communities. According to the given framework of religious law, the possibilities of funding of specific initiatives or programmes or institutions of training of Muslim religious personnel should be explored and put to use. Some countries are close to establishing a stable

source of funding for training and employment (e.g. Belgium), others are far away from that (e.g. France).

There are basically two main kinds of state-funded educational or training possibilities which can be observed in most of the different countries: First, the funding of a comprehensive higher education programme in the field of Islamic theology similar to Catholic theology offered at universities, for example, public universities (see Netherlands or Germany).

Second, the funding of specific courses or programmes for additional training and continuing education.

Whereas Belgium accredits and employs imams, the principle of laicity applied in France makes state support and funding impossible for imams working in mosques. In most of the countries, payment is an issue that falls to the Muslim communities, which are mostly organised by their umbrella organisations. A deeper discussion on how financial means could be ensured to enable more full-time employment of better educated imams might be initiated as a common task of the different Muslim institutions. Distinct forms of funding, such as establishing a common foundation, should be discussed. Such an explorative discussion should also take the specific possibilities of state funding into consideration.

Either way, the **sources of funding of programmes or university disciplines need to be transparent, should be based on the merit of the training programme and the graduates, and be sufficiently stable** to secure the kind of accountability and institutionalisation to make sure that programmes or university disciplines will succeed. While not inexpensive, the value of qualified, accountable and accredited education is tremendous.

7.1.3. Broader involvement of Muslim communities in state-funded educational programmes

In some states the study of Islamic theological studies has been introduced at public universities and in others special training programmes for Muslim religious personnel were set up.

The participation of Islamic communities in the development of such training or educational opportunities at public institutions, particularly universities, is crucial. Without this, they will not sufficiently be accepted within the Muslim communities. Muslim perspectives should be taken seriously, and the relevant actors must be treated as equals. The assumption that Muslim actors 'must be taught about Europe' creates power inequalities and should be avoided.

Thus, the Islamic communities in Switzerland not only have the task of defining the professional profile of the imam, but also those of other actors within Muslim communities and to name the qualifications they consider necessary.

The envisioned educational offers should expand the target group and not only focus on (male) imams. **Above all, women could be strengthened in their still often marginalised role in Islamic communities.** Furthermore, imams confronted with too many and/or too high expectations can be disburdened by strengthening the profiles of other actors.

7.1.4. Not a security issue

In some countries, the education of Muslim leaders is included in the framework of counter-radicalism/ security policies. Even if this is understandable, it should be noted that it might play against the acceptance of the programme and of the graduates by parts of the Muslim communities.

The scarcity of (experienced) academics in this field is an argument for joint initiatives, even if this may lead to some difficulties in terms of training language. This also implies that all educational programmes to be set up must have a research/academic option, permitting some students to follow an academic path. To deal with such a potential lack of academics, partnerships with recognised foreign academic institutions may be an option, but the core of the programme must be elaborated within the country those who

graduate are supposed to operate.

These needs are part of an emancipation process, but particularly in political circles, the question about the training is often also posed from a safety perspective. The question is regularly asked whether imams can form a buffer against the radicalisation and alienation of Muslim youth, or whether some may even be the motor for this.



Training lesson for Imams and Chaplaincies, 2019, France



AIWG Conference Berlin Open Forum

7.2. Developing domestic educational and training programmes

When developing training and education programmes for Muslim religious professionals, the entire logical chain of education purpose must be considered. As has been criticised, imam and Muslim professional education is not an easy fix for all political problems in the Muslim communities, and it needs to consider all the aspects of proper education and training from the very beginning. In each instance, this should include careful analysis to gauge the need or demand for the graduates and the purpose of the programme.



Next, the **interests of different stakeholders and possible conflicts between them needs to be accounted for**, because without alignment of expectations from both Muslim communities and the public, or without sufficient ownership in the community, the education or training programme is likely to fail. Something similar may be noted for the quality and content of the programmes. If they are not comprehensive – skills focused on and including both secular academic and Islam-specialised knowledge and training – the graduates will not be prepared for the realities of the job.

Finally, the **market of jobs and opportunities has to be considered from the beginning**. Who is going to employ the graduates, pay them a salary commensurate with the competence, provide them with benefits as well as supervision and continuing education?

nal training after employment? Mosques and Muslim communities might not have the resources for such graduates, and state support or employment might not be available. If both of these are lacking, then any programme would be challenged from the beginning.

7.2.1. Training and education should be comprehensive

It is essential to provide **comprehensive training for imams and other Muslim religious professionals**, so that they, on the one hand, obtain the required Islamic theological, religious and practical knowledge and, on the other, get further training in different fields needed for their work, such as in modern religious pedagogy and social work.

Thus, the **establishment of a standardised basic training** is very important. Through joint discussion and mutual exchange between Islamic institutions, fundamental standards for the training of imams should be established. All institutions contributing to imam education should comply with the commonly established minimum quality standards, yet with enough freedom to further design individual programmes for their individual community needs. **Any training or educational programme has to take into consideration both aspects of the Muslim theological and religious sciences and 'lay' courses, such as sociology, history, psychology and language courses.**

- In order to widen the scope of employment, such programmes, if established at universities, should allow the students to obtain a master's degree that grants access to various fields of employment.

It should therefore train graduates to service the whole range of employment linked to Islamic institutions, such as imams, theologians, preachers, executives in various associations/institutions, teachers of Muslim religious education, chaplains and other related forms of employment in the various fields of intercultural management/communication. This implies that the education provided should have a large scope and not be concentrated on a single, narrow approach or theological school.

- **Future Muslim religious leadership in Europe cannot be educated and shaped in a context separated from other theologies and without a clear understanding of modernity and secular culture.** Not only must they possess a clear understanding of these other theologies, but the theologies themselves must be hospitable toward other theologies. They need to be in a position to recognise the differences and uniqueness of the respective faiths, but also remain courteous to each other. **The future religious leadership needs to work with the other leaders in the knowledge that the difference will forever remain. The theologies do not need to be hostile to each other.**



Humboldt University Berlin

- As far as **Muslim chaplaincy** is concerned, the mapping out of how Muslim chaplains are using Islamic traditional and other sources in their work has been proposed. Whether **articles or a handbook could be produced** to help academics, students and the practitioners in the field, **such publications would help to bring some coherence to the field and raise much needed theologically based sound practices.**
- In most European countries, those interested in pursuing such efforts might glean some insights by examining the far reaching experiences acquired in the UK and USA in the field of Muslim chaplaincy, but also from the experiences of Christian chaplains.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CROSS ATLANTIC DIALOGUE

Leaders of chaplaincy and imam education programmes should embark upon sustained and focused institutional and community dialogue on topics in need of attention;

- continued curriculum development based on the perceived needs in the profession by both practitioners and the public;
- best practices in the assessment of institutional educational effectiveness; appropriately rigorous standards for graduation;
- improved access and financial support for the requisite education in both chaplaincy and imamship;
- on the need for well-educated and properly qualified imams for *masajid*;
- best practices for orienting and supporting postgraduate students studying chaplaincy and imamship at Christian institutions;
- and for onboarding new chaplains in diverse religious as well as secular institutions.

7.2.2. Integrate employment of Muslim chaplains in public institutions

For a set of common recommendations derived from the comparable Scandinavian context, first and foremost among them is the recognition of the need to integrate Muslim chaplains into existing services and employ where needed, especially in the healthcare and prison services.

Thus, the recommendations for public institutions are to create awareness of and instigate optimal chaplaincy services for different faith groups including Muslims.

This means facilitating and implementing training and courses for public civil servants and frontline staff on topics ranging from intercultural communication to general introductions to world religions, in-

cluding rituals and lived religion. To do this, both for the benefit of Muslim and non-Muslim staff, sector institutions as well as universities need to **facilitate and encourage more research on chaplaincy in the health care and prison services with a focus on client care.** This also includes following the developments in institutions where the need for chaplaincy is on the rise. That could be in educational institutions, armed forces and elderly homes.

Mohammed Toualbia, Conference Poster presentation at AIWG Conference Berlin



7.2.3. Joint initiatives and the supranational commitment of scholars

In the search for solutions to the issue of the education and training of Muslim professionals within European countries, **a comparative 'best practices' approach with joint initiatives is needed.** This recommendation informs this very report and it points beyond itself.

It is worth emphasising the importance assigned to the academic context and its co-responsibility relationships, both in the planning and management of the training courses, with the other two protagonists, namely the Muslim communities and their representative organisations, on the one side, and the state institutions, on the other.

The involvement of the university as an institution partner (and not only in the capacity of individual scholars invited to participate in courses designed by other institutions, as is more often the case), in fact, seems to constitute a framework capable of guaranteeing the scientific and pedagogical quality and, at the same time, the necessary autonomy and independence of the training proposal. Furthermore, they may help to connect relevant actors from different societal, institutional and political contexts and to create trust.

Particularly when it comes to ongoing experiences, it might be worth **highlighting the choice to intersect, in the context of a marked interdisciplinarity**, the evocation of Islamic theological knowledge with an explicit attention to the rich plurality of traditions and voices present in the current debate



- not to mention with the competencies on the social-religious phenomena offered by European scientific research.

AIWG Conference

One model showing a great deal of promise in this sense is the one currently being tested at the University of Padua as part of the aforementioned PRiMED Project. It promotes scientific cooperation with various universities in the Muslim world and aims to ensure the possibility of representing the plurality of scientific and ideological orientations involving, in particular, the faculties and institutes of Islamic science. In the long term, the prospect envisages the launch of joint research projects, doctorates, master-level courses with double degrees, with the possibility of activating resources made available by European programmes (e.g. Erasmus Plus).

Furthermore, it is recommended that the field of Islamic theology be developed at the public university level or in other institutions of higher education inside Europe in order to enable Islamic

theological self-reflection in a European context and in the specific European language.

This approach, that is, that the groundwork and the building up of Islamic theology go hand in hand and mutually enrich each other, seems to be promising. Future imams could complete a Bachelor's degree abroad – be it in Turkey, in Bosnia-Herzegovina or in Germany – and then follow this up with a Master's degree. In addition, there would be different continuing education or training offers, both at universities and within the framework of Islamic organisations¹²⁹.



International Experts,
Entrance Hall Humboldt
University Berlin

7.2.4. Building networks of religious professionals throughout Europe

Connecting imams together and building a network of Muslim religious (female and male) leaders is an essential recommendation for the near future.

Building a network could help in representing the needs and interests of imams across Europe. It could also help foster closer contact with other religious leader networks and foster interreligious cooperation. It could also provide a first stepping stone in the effort of creating more standardised quality criteria of the profession. This could result in a more effective application and hiring process for imams, which would certainly help them to find their place in one of the mosque communities¹³⁰.

This is a shared concern not only for European stakeholders, but also for governments abroad, including Turkey and Morocco. Organisations from countries of origin like the Turkish Diyanet are also increa-

singly committed to (supplementary) education for religious personnel in Western Europe. Under the pressure of national legislation (especially in Austria), but also because of the changing needs of Turks in Western European countries, they are increasingly thinking about establishing educational institutes in Europe. Certain forms of cooperation are also being sought with European parties. As things are now, many stakeholders do work together and are willing to invest in a cooperative manner, but it takes time and patience to build trustful relations.

THE EUROPE INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDIES OF ISLAM (EISI) PROJECT¹³²

The European Institute for the Studies of Islam (EISI-IEEI)¹³¹ emerged from a multi-stakeholder exchange that started back in 2017, following parallel policy conversations in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and in the European Union about the need to support the development of European imam training for the abovementioned reasons. The key idea was to develop a coherent approach that would seek to avoid some of the principal shortcomings connected with previous experiences, while trying to sketch out a path towards meeting the needs of a likely prospective situation of European Muslim communities. It would rest on the following elements.

The EISI project considers the morphing/ever-changing role of imams and other Muslim professionals and their broad spectrum of profiles. In their different/its unique context, the EISI seeks to provide high-level and quality academic training that would, at the same time, equip them with the tools and knowledge to navigate the traditional Islamic heritage in its depth and breadth. This is to be achieved by means of a historico-critical perspective, which is an integral part of the European academic episteme, and the acquisition of the kinds of knowledge and human sciences necessary to navigate the complexities of European secular societies in their legal, sociological, anthropological and cultural aspects.

The need for an overarching form of European cooperation comes from the realisation that no single European country has the capacity or standards to realise such an ambitious and much-needed programme. Therefore, the expansion to the broader European dimension is merely the logical and natural consequence of such a project, for it offers a space for mutual learning, protection/a secure educational environment, the pooling of resources (in terms of funding and finances as well as in terms of students and staff) and ensures academic recognition. Thus, the EISI seeks to embed their programme in the Erasmus structure, which will be of great academic support and anchor this training at European level.



8. Endnotes

- 1 Pew Research Center 2017, 27.
- 2 Masci 2017.
- 3 Mohamed 2018.
- 4 Pew Research Center 2017, 29.
- 5 According to Husson 2019, 114.
- 6 According to Jacobsen and Vinding 2020; In 2019, a new study looking at conceptions of masculinity and attitudes towards equality, especially among minority ethnic men, carried out by the Equality Section in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has provided a more substantial data basis for the estimate of Muslims in Denmark.
- 7 According to Zwilling 2019, citing the National Institute of Statistics (ISNEE) in France.
- 8 Nicolai et al. 2019, 304, citing Sticks 2016.
- 9 Tacchini 2019, 372, citing Fabrizio Ciocca 2018.
- 10 De Koning 2019, 446, citing Statistics Netherlands 2015, and Willem Hujink 2018.
- 11 According to Bøe 2019, 480, estimates range between 166,861 and 270,000 Muslims. The lower of end of the estimate range is based on those who self-identified as Muslim according to Statistics Norway and the official register of religious communities who receive funding.
- 12 Larsson and Sorgenfrei 2019 reference PEW 2017.
- 13 According to Tunger-Zanetti and Purdie 2019, 625, citing the Federal Office of Statistics 2017.
- 14 According to Jones and Elshayyal 2019, 669, citing the Office for National Statistics 2019.
- 15 The Muslim Council of Britain 2020.
- 16 Beauchemin, Hamel, and Simon 2015.
- 17 Laurence & Vaisse, 2007, p.146
- 18 Laurence & Vaisse, 2007, p.146
- 19 Bosco, 2014, p.77
- 20 El-Yousfi, 2020, p.2
- 21 El-Yousfi, 2020, p.2
- 22 El-Yousfi 2020, p.2
- 23 CFCM, 2019
- 24 Henni-Moulaï, 2015
- 25 Tietze, 2013, p.7
- 26 EMB, 2020
- 27 EMB, 2020
- 28 CIB, 2020
- 29 Boender 2015.
- 30 On CMO, see Boender 2014.
- 31 Polderislam 2020.
- 32 Rohe 2017, 140.
- 33 BMI, 2020
- 34 Deutsche Islam Konferenz, 2020a
- 35 Deutsche Islam Konferenz, 2020a
- 36 Deutsche Islam Konferenz, 2020b
- 37 Deutsche Islam Konferenz, 2020c
- 38 Süess and Pahud de Mortanges 2017, 8.
- 39 Baumann et al. 2019, 30; Rauch 2018.
- 40 Inforel 2020.
- 41 Elgvin 2020.
- 42 SMR, 2020
- 43 SMR, 2020
- 44 Kulturdepartementet, 2010
- 45 Sverige Radio, 2014b
- 46 IRN, 2020
- 47 Ertesvåg & Bulai, 2017
- 48 IRN, 2020
- 49 IRN, 2020
- 50 NRK, 2017
- 51 Ertesvåg & Bulai, 2017
- 52 Rhazzali 2013.
- 53 Presidency of Religious Affairs 2013.
- 54 Bellut and Duran 2019.
- 55 Thijl and Sunier 2015.
- 56 Thijl and Sunier 2015.
- 57 De Ruiter et al. 2018.
- 58 Jacobs and Lipowsky 2019.
- 59 Jacobs and Lipowsky, 2019, p.5)
- 60 Grande Mosque de Paris, 2020a
- 61 Grande Mosque de Paris, 2020b
- 62 AIWG, 2019, p. 18
- 63 Grande Mosque de Paris, 2020b
- 64 Boender 2015.
- 65 IESH 2020.

- 66 Fregosi 2005.
- 67 Heimbach 2009.
- 68 Islamiq.de 2020.
- 69 Heimbach 2009.
- 70 Ceylan, 2019, 4.
- 71 Ceylan 2019, 5.
- 72 Observatoire de la laïcité 2018, 176.
- 73 Corbier 2015.
- 74 Examples of this include www.islamakadamiet.dk (Denmark), <https://islamakademin.se/> (Sweden) and www.madinainstitute.no (Norway).
- 75 Det teologiske fakultet 2019.
- 76 Universitetet i Oslo 2020.
- 77 Schmid 2020, 604.
- 78 Lang, Schmid and Sheikhzadegan 2019:372
- 79 MIHE 2020a.
- 80 Siddiqui 2003, 509.
- 81 MIHE 2020a.
- 82 Siddiqui 2003, 513.
- 83 MIHE 2020b.
- 84 MIHE 2020a.
- 85 In Italy, only a few Islamic places of worship can be defined as mosques; all the others could more appropriately be defined as *muşallayât*, that is, 'simple prayer rooms that in general re-use and adapt pre-existing spaces for to the most essential needs of religious service'.
- 86 Schmid and Trucco 2019a, 5–34.
- 87 Jacobs and Lipowsky 2019, 5.
- 88 Goulet and Reichardt 2016.
- 89 Halm et al. 2012.
- 90 Ceylan 2019, 10.
- 91 Daoud 2019.
- 92 Schmid and Trucco 2019a, 6–15.
- 93 Lang et al. 2019, 368.
- 94 Pahud de Mortanges 2017, 123–124.
- 95 Tunger-Zanetti and Schneuwly Purdie 2020, 622.
- 96 Lang et al. 2019, 368.
- 97 Begovic, Muris. 2020. Personal communication with the author, February 4, 2020; Lang, Andrea. 2020. Personal communication with the author. January 21, 2020. ;Tunger-Zanetti 2020.
- 98 Statement by M. Abdelkader Arbi, Military Chief Chaplain for Muslim Denomination, at the exhibition 'Soldats de France: l'engagement des soldats musulmans de 1802 à 1962'. Organised at the Grand Mosque of Paris (GMP) on 10 January 2019 and inaugurated by Geneviève Darrieussecq, State-Secretary to the Ministry of Armed Forces, in the presence of Dalil Boubakeur, rector of the GMP, M. Abdelkader Arbi, Military Chief Chaplain for Muslim Denomination, and Ghaleb Bencheikh, President of the Foundation of Islam of France (FIF).
- 99 de Woillemont 2009.
- 100 Boniface 2005, 92.
- 101 La Croix 2016.
- 102 Statement by M. Abdelkader Arbi, Military Chief Chaplain for Muslim Denomination during an interview with Mohammed Tualbia (held on 14 January 2020).
- 103 Chambraud and Guibert 2018.
- 104 Husson and Dury 2006; Husson 2007; Husson, Mandin, and Martiniello 2014.
- 105 Observatoire de la laïcité 2018, 176.
- 106 Corbier 2015.
- 107 Nielsen 2018.
- 108 Ceylan 2019, 28.
- 109 DITIB 2020.
- 110 Ahrens 2018.
- 111 Danmarks Radio 2018.
- 112 Frosvaret 2020.
- 113 Muslimsk Andlig Vård 2020.
- 114 Vinding 2019.
- 115 St. Olavs Hospital 2020.
- 116 Ulsten and Bjørge 2018.
- 117 Schmid 2020, 599.
- 118 Ceylan 2019, 15.
- 119 Ceylan 2019, 16.
- 120 Schmid and Trucco 2019a, 49–51.
- 121 Adapted from Vinding 2018.
- 122 Jacobs and Lipowsky 2019, 7.
- 123 Zwilling 2014.
- 124 Jacobs and Lipowsky 2019, 9.
- 125 Hoffner 2015.
- 126 Chambraud 2016.
- 127 Jacobs and Lipowsky 2019, 11.
- 128 Lang, Andrea. 2020. Personal Communication with the author. January 21, 2020.
- 129 Schmid and Trucco 2019b, 38–39.
- 130 Ceylan 2019, 30.
- 131 The EISI is a private foundation under the terms of Belgian law, gathering academics from all backgrounds interested and involved in the training of imams and other religious leaders in Europe. It was set up at the initiative of European Muslim academics.
- 132 This is summarized from a contribution of Michael Privot.



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DENMARK, NORWAY & SWEDEN

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FRANCE

Muhammad Tualbia graduated, among other things, with a Master's Degree at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) on 'Muslim Chaplaincy in a Secular Context: The Quality of Training in a challenging field'. His PhD research deals with the transformations of the profession of imams in French-speaking Europe. He was a chaplain trainer and has been teaching the art of speech in Arabic-French to perspective chaplains at the Al Ghazali Institute of the Grand Mosque of Paris, where he is also charged with the audio-visual communication.

GERMANY

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UNITED KINGDOM

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